

SACRIFICE: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE CONCEPT IN ST. GREGORY OF ...

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IN ST. GREGORY OF NYSSA'S CONTEM-
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SHRI AUROBINDO'S COMMENTARY ON
THE VEDA.

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ST. GREGORY OF NYSSA'S CONTEMPLATION ON THE LIFE OF
MOSES AND SHRI AUROBINDO'S COMMENTARY ON THE VEDA**

by

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of the requirements for the degree of
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ABSTRACT

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The purpose of this study is to show systematically how sacrifice, both as idea and act, is approached by two widely separated thinkers, namely, St. Gregory of Nyssa and Shri Aurebindo. Both apply a similar exegetical approach to their respective scriptural sources while developing a common theme: sacrifice viewed paradigmatically as journey, battle and ascent. This common method is offered as the "control" internal to this study. It is on the basis of this paradigmatic structure that the similarities in difference between Gregory and Aurebindo are examined. Chapter I explains this purpose and approach.

Chapter II examines Gregory's approach to sacrifice through his relating the life of Moses to Christ's Passion. The chapter's three divisions comprise: 1) Gregory's textual adductions from Scripture and his commentary thereon; 2) his general interpretation of sacrifice, in the Contemplation, understood as journey, battle and ascent; 3) the Divine, Divine-human and human interrelationships and activities in sacrifice conceived as journey, battle and ascent.

Chapter III introduces and criticizes some Western theories of Vedic sacrifice. The following three sections are structurally comparable with Chapter II, following the same pattern: 1) Aurebindo's textual adductions from Scripture and his direct commentary on them. Here a linguistic critique is advanced by comparing Aurebindo's trans-

lation of the Rg Veda with Geldner's; 2) Aurobindo's interpretation of the Rg Vedic conception of sacrifice as journey, battle and ascent; 3) the Divine, Divine-human and human activities in the sacrifice and conclusion.

Chapter IV divides also into three sections: 1) a textual comparison of key concepts and images in order to show what is textually fixed in the way of cardinal elements in both commentaries; 2) similarities and differences in the treatment of sacrifice as journey, battle and ascent; again, the Divine, Divine-human and human initiatives brought forward and related to the concepts power, light and beatitude; 3) the essential doctrinal differences between Gregory and Aurobindo compared, concluding with a reflective statement on the significance of the study for further metaphysical enquiry.

In particular it is suggested that the poetical and religious categories of journey, battle and ascent have respective metaphysical equivalents in the concepts process, encounter and correspondence -- the latter whether in terms of likeness (image) or identity. A religious metaphysic grounded in sacrifice so paradigmatically conceived might claim the advantage of wider and deeper insight into the basic unity of the person and his world instead of tending to emphasize one problem, or category, at the expense of others. Whether such a metaphysic is possible or no, Gregory and Aurobindo invite us to a whole vision of man and his world. Within the focus of their respective religious traditions, both thinkers would relate man to the Divine through a union of infinite potential for the world's and man's transfiguration.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter		Page
I.	INTRODUCTION	1
	Statement of the Problem	1
	Definitions and Terminology	6
II.	ST. GREGORY OF NYSSA'S CONTEMPLATION ON THE LIFE OF MOSES	12
	The Scriptural Texts Adduced by Gregory in Support of His Approach to Sacrifice through Christ's Passion	12
	Other Texts Adduced in Illustration and Support of Key Concepts and Images	15
	The rock	15
	Light	16
	The bread from heaven	16
	Darkness	17
	The serpent	17
	Demons	18
	Killing of the firstborn	18
	Trumpets	19
	Journey	20
	Battle	22
	Ascent	23
	Gregory's Interpretation of Sacrifice as Journey, Battle, and Ascent	23
	The sacrifice	26
	The journey	29
	The battle	34
	The ascent	38
	Conclusion: The Divine, Divine-human and Human Activities and Interrelationships in Sacrifice	41
	The sacrifice	42
	The journey	43
	The battle	44
	The ascent	45
III.	SHRI AUROBINDO'S COMMENTARY, <u>ON THE VEDA</u>	47
	The Theory of Vedic Sacrifice according to Keith's <u>Religion and Philosophy of the Veda</u>	47
	Translation of <u>Rg Veda</u> by Geldner compared with Aurobindo's translation of Selected Texts from Various Hymns; followed by Aurobindo's Interpre- tation	51
	Summary of Aurobindo's Interpretation of the <u>Rg Vedic Conception of Sacrifice</u>	77

Chapter	Page
III. (continued)	
Swar	77
Light	77
Cry of heaven	78
Godheads	78
Waters and rivers	78
Immortality	78
Hill	79
Panis	79
Pilgrim sacrifice	79
The gated house	80
Agni's place of activity	80
Aurobindo's conception of Vedic sacrifice with respect to the whole work: <u>On the Veda</u> ..	81
Critical approach to variations in translation ..	86
General Conclusion: The Divine, Divins-human and Human Activities in the Sacrifice	98
IV. COMPARISON OF GREGORY AND AUROBINDO WITH REFERENCE TO THE TWO WORKS, <u>THE CONTEMPLATION</u> , AND THE COMMENTARY <u>ON THE VEDA</u> , RESPECTIVELY	113
Comparison of Key Concepts and Images	113
The rock	113
The mountain	115
The darkness	115
The light	116
The serpent	117
Demons: "Brother"	117
Killing of the firstborn	117
The trumpets	118
Similarities and Differences in the Treatment of Sacrifice as Journey-battle-ascent	118
Sacrifice	118
Journey	120
Battle	122
Ascent	124
Comparison of Some Essential Differences in Doctrine	127
The significance of this study for further metaphysical study	151
BIBLIOGRAPHY	154

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

This study will show how sacrifice, both as idea and as act, is approached by two widely separated thinkers who, nevertheless, share sufficient common ground to make their comparison significant for an inquiry into the structure of religious thought and experience.

St. Gregory of Nyssa and Shri Aurobindo are separated by time and tradition, the former being a Church Father of the 4th century and the latter a Hindu thinker who passed away in 1950. That some agreement should be found in the thought of a Christian and Hindu upon as universal a theme as religion is surely no occasion for surprise. However, when both apply a similar approach to the explication of their respective scriptures while developing a common theme, namely, sacrifice viewed as journey, battle and ascent, then both theme and method are worth close attention. A common method offers a "control"; and when this control is internal to the study, i.e., provided by the authors themselves, then the common theme may be analyzed with a strictness that is not much hindered by the external measures which the student brings to bear upon the subject.

The ancient conception of the poet as prophet and maker (cf. vates and *Πολιτῆς, Ποιέω*), diviner and visionary suitably characterizes Gregory and Aurobindo in relation to the two works

studied here. This being the case, it seems advisable to make an introductory statement concerning the significance of the religious imagination for this study as a whole; and in particular for the paradigm, journey-battle-ascent.

When one considers that Gregory and Aurobindo (who chose to explicate the mystical significance of two great journeys cast in the heroic tradition, namely, the Exodus of the Old Testament and the journey of the Agirasa who, led by Indra, delivered the cows) bring their own poetical gifts to bear upon scriptures replete with religious poetry, it is to be expected that a poetical exegesis will result. In part, this study will demonstrate the application of such exegesis and the tool employed by these thinkers to analyze and illuminate the scriptures upon which they drew for their own unique insights.

This conceptual tool is the above mentioned paradigm. It is helpful to note that the world epics divide roughly into three types: (1) those related to the search (voyage) for some lost home, bride, or friend; (2) those related to heroic warfare with fellow men and/or kinsmen as antagonists — warriors of the same quality of heroism whose battles are mutually destructive and set against a background of wars of migration; (3) those related to the estab-¹lishment of world order. The relation of these three types to

1. G. R. Leavy, The Sword from the Rock (London, 1953), p. 13. This scholar offers the following as respective examples of the above: (1) Gilgamesh; the Odyssey; the Ramayana; (2) the Iliad; the Mahabharata; and Teutonic heroic poetry; (3) the creation epic of Mesopotamia; Hesiod's theogony; the Revelation (St. John); and Paradise Lost.

the paradigm journey, battle, and ascent is striking. The least obviously related is the type devoted to the establishment of world order. However, as will be shown later in this study, every ascent is the achievement of a new and "higher" integration of powers, whether the means to it be conceived and experienced as a triumph of the powers of existence over those of non-existence (¹asat) as with Aurobindo, or a further penetration into the divine Darkness for love and pursuit of its correlative Light as with Gregory.

Even in the light of the above literary evidence, to say nothing of what studies of ritual and graphic art may yet contribute, it seems quite clear that before the historical revelations man had already intuited that his life is experienced metaphorically as a journey, battle and ascent. If, then, sacrifice is assumed to be the ground of life itself, it is not surprising to find such religious seers as hold this assumption, structuring the actuality of sacrifice as existing precisely in these three forms. Such is the case with Gregory and Aurobindo. Therefore not only is this paradigm an exegetical tool. It suggests itself as a methodological tool by which to estimate the likenesses and distinctions of the various religious traditions insofar as they treat of life as Way, Battle and Ascent and all variant combinations of these three.

Insofar as this paradigm expresses a form of perennial insight one may infer its primitive status in human experience whether conscious

1. Cf. RV 10.129.

or unconscious. This is not reductionism for it may not be concluded that revelation is nothing but a variation upon this primitive paradigm. In the logical order the normative aspect of revelation — scriptural or otherwise — properly comes first; but it is now plausible to suggest that this paradigm is first in the genetic order. If so, we may rightly expect that revelation will include a new and concrete expression of it, whatever else revelation might come also to embody.

The question of the relation of the products of the religious imagination to what is loosely termed the concrete world-order is naturally evoked by a study such as this. This study is not properly within the province of religious epistemology. Nevertheless, it cannot be undertaken without recognizing that both Gregory and Aurobindo presuppose a general theory of religious knowledge which will begin to emerge in dim outline in the course of the development of this thesis. For instance, the paradigm which these thinkers share in common presupposes the existence of the Divine and its shared and mutually affective relations with man and the world. Consequently this world is seen as the occasion and arena of theophanies. Such theophanies are the burning bush which Moses encountered and (insofar as a form or rūpa of an 'idea' or power can be said to be that very power), the flowing of waters and a white horse, in Vedic thought.¹ These conceptions and experiences are largely

1. J. Gonda, Some Observations on the Relations between "Gods" and "Powers" in the Veda... (Copenhagen, 1957), especially, pp. 1ff; 97.

foreign to modern Weltanschauungen and though they are familiar to scholars today, they appear often somewhat in the same case with fossils. However, the gradual decline of the religious imagination in modern life makes such a study as this just as imperative as it might appear exotic if it be true that the loss of the effective religious imagination can have the gravest consequences for the well-being of any culture.

Another difficulty deriving directly from the decline of
¹
 the religious imagination is that studies such as this, which depend in part upon the reader's exercise of that imagination, come to seem more relevant to historical or linguistic research than to problems of religious philosophy. However, from the standpoint of the religious imagination the paradigm in this study is as contemporary for religious thought as it has ever been. This is because it is a form that imagination gives to its own experience. Contrary to what is sometimes thought, the forms and products of the religious imagination do not found its possibility though they can evoke its response. Consequently, the "minds" of Gregory and Aurobindo are not properly studied through the paradigm, but rather the paradigm is understood through a mind sensitive to such visions as they themselves suffered and artistically portrayed. If one can

1. This decline is nowhere better evidenced than through the concern contemporary thinkers show for the "problem of symbol" wherein symbol and myth are usually referred for explanation to anything but what the religious imagination claims for them. This results in our listening only to what we say about myth (not that all we say is insignificant) rather than permitting myth to speak for itself on its own authority as an arché unique and meaningful as such.

verify the meaning, even in part, of these visions through his own religious experience then the paradigm journey-battle-ascent becomes something not merely formal (a datum of classification) or epiphenomenal, but concretely actual; for he sees his own life so structured and so moved.

The method brought to this study is relatively simple and systematic. Sacrifice is shown to be the central idea in both the Contemplation and On the Veda. Three approaches to the subject are made: (1) the Scriptural foundation upon which the authors rest their respective commentaries; (2) the critical passages which reveal a common concern and structure; these will be selected from the commentaries; (3) some of the essential differences of doctrine between Gregory and Aurobindo. The first two approaches draw heavily upon the textual matter of the commentaries, while the third is an exposition which offers conclusions based upon that comparison, namely, the relation between the authors' adduced scriptural sources and their commentaries thereon.

It is hoped that this inquiry will serve to illuminate the similarities and differences of approach to sacrifice made by two renowned thinkers of different personal background and traditions, while at the same time deepening the significance of sacrifice itself for the religious consciousness.

Definitions and Terminology

These definitions and terms have been chosen to suit the thought world of Gregory and Aurobindo as they seem to be repre-

sented in the Contemplation and On the Veda. Of course, no two persons are likely to agree completely where such definitions and terms are brought into discussion. Nevertheless, these terms should prove useful as a guide to the point of view undertaken in this study as well as offering certain limits of reference. The latter is always very hard to achieve in any study of mysticism without falsifying one's own intent, to say nothing of misrepresenting the mystics studied. Certainly such terminology should be approached with the caution in mind that it lacks the precision of scientific constructs or "clear and distinct ideas." However, what is lacking in exactness of discourse may in part be compensated by the evocative power of the language of mysticism. Patience might be easier come by if it be remembered that rigorously systematic formulation must be postponed until much more is publicly known about certain experiences which to date seem by definition to be at least partly private. This places a double burden upon student and reader, in that what is 'felt' is notoriously harder to define than what is merely calculated.

Mysticism

The practice through devotion, thought and action of incorporating the Divine; of realizing the Divine nature to be beyond the limits of discursive reason, yet nevertheless continually revealing itself to the creature open to receive it; of doing the will of the Divine for the sake of the Divine.

Myth

The language of correspondence, presupposing an ontological

relationship between the divine life and the destiny of man and the world. Natural events and objects are the instrument of revelation and, as such, transcend in reference their pragmatic and historical significances. An historical drama may be interpreted as a paradigm of man's journey to God; natural objects, e.g., water, stone, mountain, etc., are used as ideograms to bear a psychological reference in relation to man. They may also bear an ontological reference, e.g., "the mountain of being," "Rock as the space of creaturehood," etc. The gods are not only personifications of natural powers but are real personalities as forms of the divine energies manifested "on this side of creation." Gods, demons, devas, asuras, angels, devils, names and powers, i.e., principals and activities participate in the cosmic drama; they are mythically represented as the powers of Light and Darkness warring for man's allegiance and control of the world's destiny.

This dualism is primarily psychological rather than ontological, yet insofar as the world is an unfinished creation, or a fallen one, the nature of the realized being of the world is directly related to the character of the battle. In relation to the what-might-have-been had the will of God fulfilled itself exclusive of the Fall, it is thought not unreasonable to speak of a rupture in the relation between the being of God and existence as we know it through the historical mode. Being is thus affected insofar as Christian dogma maintains the mystery of a suffering and dying God. While it is impossible to fit such a notion into a rational scheme of being, Christian mystics have repeatedly attested to it and there is no

reason to believe that Gregory was an exception.

Sacrifice

The act of making sacred and whole; the ground of creation by which the Divine brings the world into being. Man sacrifices as he immolates his present self-realization in favor of his divine destiny, thus bringing the whole created order into participation with the Divine life. In sacrifice man makes the gesture representing his radical dependence upon the Divine. Sacrifice attests man's responsibility for the world empirical and the world as the created order, for the gods are mutually dependent upon man. Sacrifice has three categories:

Journey. The consent to and act of following after God and/or the gods. The course of life run according to the divine will. The difficult progress toward man's divine destiny.

Battle. The encounter with forces inimical to the divinization of man and the world. The opposition, psychologically of the lower to the higher self ("spirit" vs. "flesh"). The assault of the demonic powers upon the wayfarer, the "lions in the path." The consent to join faith with the life according to conscience.

Ascent. The amplification of all one's powers. The consent to self-transcendence which permits the divine destiny to realize itself continuously in the mutable nature of man. Man's ascent to God is man's divinization, his transfiguration.

Fall

The psychological and ontological rupture from participation in

the Divine life.

Deification

The divinization and transfiguration of man and the world; their reclamation into their proper image. The proper destiny of man and the world namely, their full participation in the Divine life. The union of Creator and creature in which their identities are preserved.

Before beginning with the main body of this study there is one thing necessary to underscore at the outset. Neither of the chief works which form the basis of this venture is properly called systematically philosophical. It is just this, however, which makes them so useful for the inquiry. If one looks for a more systematic statement in a more philosophical genre, he should consult Gregory's Dialogue on the Soul and Resurrection or Aurobindo's The Life Divine. The distinction between these latter and the Contemplation and On the Veda really makes this study possible. The Contemplation and On the Veda, while complete statements in themselves, are not systems of belief; rather, they represent attempts to elucidate basic sets of images. Of course, they mirror some theological presuppositions but these do not so much cloak the images as regulate their focus. Some symbols appear more prominently than others, for instance. The elucidations of these sets of images might be conceived to be one remove from the direct contemplation of the images. Consequently the author's explications are dependent less upon deductive and inductive

methods and almost entirely upon imaginative intuition. (It is important to note that this approach is basically an "aristocratic" view of truth and has more in common with the Hindu concept of valid knowledge criteria which for its basis opposes scriptural, i.e., textual authority to discursive reasoning. It can hardly be doubted that Gregory so conceived the authority of the Old and New Testaments. However, this need not lead to a crude fundamentalism; nor does it in the cases of Aurobindo and Gregory.) Their exercise of the religious imagination in these cases produces a prophetic power which invites commerce with the images as such, rather than offering a systematic rationale of the images which may properly call for an assessment by critical reason. Such an evaluation would, in the latter case, be a critique of a critic. However, Gregory and Aurobindo, in these works, are themselves writing as poet-seers whatever else they may have intended in other works.

All textual references to the Contemplation and On the Veda are brought into the main text of the thesis, e.g., for the Contemplation, the manuscript reference can appear thus: (412B). When reference is made to one of Fr. Daniélou's notes, it can appear thus: (174n), and will refer to the 1941 edition of his translation of the Contemplation into French. Biblical references will be brought into the text also, e.g., Ps. 77:10.

References to the Rg Veda appear also in the text thus: 8.60.2 and to On the Veda thus: (209). A combined reference thus appears as (1.71.3: 228).

Regular footnotes will be rendered conventionally.

CHAPTER II

ST. GREGORY OF NYSSA'S CONTEMPLATION ON THE LIFE OF MOSES

There are three main divisions to this chapter: 1) Gregory's textual adductions from Scripture and his direct commentary upon them; 2) the general interpretation of sacrifice, in the Contemplation, understood as journey, battle and ascent; 3) the Divine, Divine-human and human interrelationships and activities in sacrifice conceived as journey, battle and ascent.

The above paradigm will be reproduced in Chapter III as the format for comparison with Aurobindo's On the Veda.

The Scriptural texts adduced by
Gregory in support of his approach
to Sacrifice through Christ's Passion

The following will be a presentation first of the text from the Revised Standard Version of the Bible immediately after which will follow a fairly free translation of Deniélou's French translation of the Contemplation. They will be placed under a and b respectively.

Ps. 77:10

a. And I say, "It is my grief that the right hand of the Most High has changed."

b. In condescension to the weakness of our nature, the divine nature -- as if contemplated by the prophet in its immutability -- is seen to take the form of our nature. (333 D)

John 1:18

a. No one has ever seen God; the only Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has made him known.

b. "The right hand of the Most High," which is "in the bosom of the Father" is adapted to our image when it goes out to manifest itself to us. When he had healed our sicknesses he brought it back into his own bosom (in fact, the Father is the bosom of the One in whom that hand appeared) -- that hand which was found among us and had taken our color. Far from his unalterable nature being susceptible of change and decay, it is ours, on the contrary, which, though passible, was transfigured and became changeless by participation in the divine immutability. (336 A)

I. Cor. 10:4

a. (v.3) and all ate the same supernatural food (v.4) and all drank the same supernatural drink. For they drank from the supernatural Rock which followed them, and the Rock was Christ.¹

b. The Rock is Christ, inaccessible and resistant to the unbelievers; yet, however little approached with the rod of faith becomes a drink that pours out and spreads to the interior of those who open themselves to him.² (368 A)

1. Note marginal comment that "supernatural" is rendered "spiritual" in the Greek original.

2. See Daniélou's note re John 14:23 concerning the interior capacity (*ἐξουα*) to which the divine communication is proportional -- a central notion in Gregory's anthropology, note above, 362 B.

Matt. 5:18

a. ...not one iota, not a dot, will pass from the law until all is accomplished.

b. ...the mystery of the cross appears everywhere in the Law. That is why the Gospel says somewhere that "not one iota...." He means there that the perpendicular and transversal signs when united make the figure of the cross. This sign contemplated in Moses, is raised like a trophy and gives victory to those who contemplate it.
¹
 (372 C)

Col. 1:17

a. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

b. He had no need of a temporal birth. But for our sakes, who lost being by a weakness of our will, he deigned to be born according to our life in order to bring back again to being what had fallen out of it. (381 B)

Rom. 3:25

a. ...whom God put forward as an expiation by his blood, to be received by faith.

b. (Gregory notes that he feels there is no need to comment on this.)

Gal. 6:14

a. But far be it from me to glory except in the cross of our

1. See note: "le îôta et l'apex reunis forment un T, qui est une image de la croix."

Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me and I to the world.

b. (Gregory does not quote the above text but it is implied in his remarks as follows): The Passion is the cross. Thus the one who looks toward it, as the scripture shows, is not injured by the poison of desire. He who turns toward the cross makes his whole life dead to the world and crucified so that it is invulnerable to sin. (413 D; note also Gal. 5:17 in regard to 416 A)

Other texts adduced in illustration
and support of key concepts and images

(1) The Rock:

John 14:23

a. If a man loves me, he will keep my word and My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. (368 A)

b. Same as I. Cor. 10:4, see supra, p. 13.

Ps. 40:2

a. He drew me up from the desolate pit, out of the miry bog and set my feet upon a rock, making my steps secure.

b. Here the Rock is Christ, the fullness of virtue. (405 D)

I. Cor. 15:58

a. Therefore my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord....

b. According to Paul's counsel, one's course is all the more rapid, the more firm and unshakeable he is in the good. (405 D)

(ii) Light:John 8:12; 14:6

a. I am the light of the world; he who follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life. (8:12)

...I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man comes to the Father, but by me. (14:6; 332 C, D)

b. ...the text shows us that the conduct of virtues leads us to the knowledge of this light....Equally it teaches us the mystery of the virgin birth, of that divine fire which in being born enlightens the world.... (332 C, D)

Rev. 4:5

a. From the throne issue flashes of lightning, and voices and peals of thunder, and before the throne burn seven torches of fire, which are the seven spirits of God;

b. ...the various rays of the Spirit which shine in the Tabernacle. (The heavenly tabernacle.) (384 C)

John 5:35Matt. 5:14

a. You are the light of the world. (Matt. 5:14)

He was a burning and shining lamp, and you were willing to rejoice for a while in his light. (John the Baptist)

b. Those who are lights by their works are called columns and lamps. (This is said of the earthly tabernacle.) (385 A, B)

(iii) The Bread from HeavenJohn 6:51

a. I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any one eats of this bread he will live for ever; and the bread which I

shall give for the life of the world is my flesh.

b. (Gregory refers the above to the manna in the wilderness.)

This is the mystery of the virgin birth....This bread which is not produced by the earth is the Word. Thanks to its many different qualities it adapts itself to the inclinations of those who receive it. (368 C)

(iv) Darkness

John 1:18

Ps. 18:11

a. No one has ever seen God; the only Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has made him known. (John 1:18)

He made darkness his covering around him, his canopy thick dark clouds with water. (Ps. 18:11)

b. ...this negation determines that knowledge of the divine essence is inaccessible not only to men but to all intellectual nature. Thus, when Moses had progressed in gnosis, he declared he saw God in the darkness, i.e., he knew that divinity is essentially that which transcends all gnosis...."Moses entered into the darkness where God is found," the story says. Which God? "The one who made the darkness his covering," as David says, who was also initiated into the same secret (ἀβυσσος) sanctuary to the hidden mysteries. (377 B)

(v) The Serpent

Rom. 8:3

a. ...sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh....

b. This is the image of the serpent, and not the serpent ac-

according to the word of St. Paul. The true serpent is sin (*italics mine*). (413 D, 416 A)

(vi) Demons

Col. 1:18
Mark 1:24

a. ...he is the beginning, the first born from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. (Col. 1:18)

What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God.
(Mark 1:24)

b. Also in the Gospel story we see the horde of demons, legion, who prepared to oppose the power of the Lord, but at his approach who is preeminent in everything, they did not hide the truth but declared his supernatural power proclaiming that the divine nature will, in the future, inflict upon evil doers their punishment. (421 A, B)

(vii) Killing of the first-born

Matt. 5:22

a. (v.21: You have heard that it was said to the men of old, 'You shall not kill; and whoever kills shall be liable to judgment.')

v.22. But I say unto you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be liable to judgment....

b. ...as the Lord teaches us in the Gospel (referring in its own way to the killing of the Egyptian first-born) to destroy covetousness and anger...; adultery and murder would be unable to produce

1. Cf. Mark 5:7-9; Luke 4:33-37.

themselves if anger did not provoke murder, and desire adultery....
 It is likewise with a snake; when one strikes it on the head, he has
 killed all the rest of it at the same time. (353 A, B)

(viii) Trumpets

Ps. 19:4; 1

a. ...their voice goes out through all the earth, and their
 words to the end of the world. (19:4)

The heavens are telling the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims his handiwork.

b. The divine sermon is the true trumpet that strikes the ears; it is powerful at first and becomes stronger, striking the ears more loudly in these latter times. The Law and the Prophets have proclaimed the mystery of the Incarnation, but these first sounds were very weak....But "the sound of the trumpet" as the Word says, "became louder and louder." These last sounds which represent the preaching of the Gospel have struck the ears. It is the voice of the Holy Spirit, by means of instruments....: as for the instruments, they are the Prophets and Apostles of which it is written in the Psalms...." (19:4; 376 A, B)

It seems to me...that the symbol of the heavenly trumpet can be interpreted otherwise than we have done....It may be concerned with the admirable harmony of the world, proclaiming the wisdom which shines in the universe declaring the glory of God manifested in visible things according to the word...." (19:1)

...The one whose heart's ear is purified recognises this sound — I mean that the gnosis of divine power proceeds from the

contemplation of the universe — and is led by it to penetrate in the spirit to where God is. (377 D, 380 A)

(ix) Journey

John 14:6

a. I am the way....

b. ...the Only-begotten God, by whom all things were made...

1

is at the same time the Space for those who run (he is the way, track of) the course according to his own expression.... (408 C)

Phil. 3:13

a. ...but one thing I do, forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead....

b. To stop running appears dangerous to him. Why? Because all good, by its very nature has no limit, but is limited only by the encounter with its contrary: thus life by death, light by darkness...thus to stop running in the path of virtue is to begin to run in that of vice....If beings who know the Beautiful in itself aspire

1. Τόπος, trans. Espace by Daniélou, is a difficult concept to translate into English. It seems to suggest, in the context, both place and space at one and the same time, e.g., the Space is also "the Rock for those who are established (consolidated, strengthened) and the Abode for those who rest (ibid.). The expression seems to carry with it the notion of an expanding room, or a distance between two points which is stretched as one runs. It suggests the comic yet profound idea that one must keep running in order to keep up with himself. The two points are, of course, the stations of created and uncreated being — knowledge of the latter depending upon its infinite pursuit by the creature. One must conclude, therefore, that place, space, room, rock, abode and distance are all metaphors.

It might be worth comparing this concept with that of śūnyatā of Mahāyāna Buddhism — a void and plentitude at the same time.

to participate in it, because the latter is infinite the desire of the one who seeks to so participate will necessarily be coextensive with that infinite and will know no rest. And so it is quite impossible to attain perfection since...perfection is not enclosed within limits and virtue has only one limit, boundlessness. How should one arrive at the boundary pursued if it does not exist?

However, just because what we look for lies absolutely outside our range, we should not on that account neglect the commandment of the Lord when he said, "You, therefore, must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matt. 5:48)....In fact, who knows whether that state of mind which consists in always stretching toward a greater good is not the perfection of human nature? (300 D-¹ 301 C)

Matt. 7:14

a. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few.

b. As when two precipices confine a path upon a sharp ridge, there is, for the one who passes, the danger of leaving the center for one side or the other. In fact, equally on each side the abyss awaits the one who turns aside....This teaches us that the virtues lie in the center. Every evil is produced by a want or excess in relation to virtue. Thus in relation to courage, cowardice is a

1. See note: "La thèse original de Gregoire est que la perfection de l'être crée soit le progrès même. Ceci va contre la conception grecque selon laquelle tout mouvement implique imperfection...."

lack of virtue, presumption an excess. (420 A)

(x) Battle

II. Cor. 6:7

a. ...with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left;

b. Virtue operates in a double manner -- by faith and by life lived according to conscience; we are made safe by one and the other thanks to the protection of the shields, and we remain invulnerable to the darts of the enemy with the weapons of justice to the right and to the left.¹ (Note I. Tim. 1:19.) (392 B)

Rom. 13:14

a. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

1. The symbolism of the right (hand) and left (hand) persists universally. It is especially suggestive, in Gregory and Aurobindo, for the discourse on the spiritual life. The right hands of God and of Moses are associated with manifestation and/or with something done, executed. (331 D, 336 A) Likewise with Indra, it is with the right hand that he causes lightning. (RV 10.47.1; 6.22.9?) There are probably not enough occurrences in Rg Veda to be specific re right hand (dakṣiṇa)(at least six times) and left hand (śavya)(at least three times). Again, in Gregory, in describing the priestly vestment, he says, "the small chains by which these ornaments are attached to the arms appear to me to signify that the perfect life demands the union of practical philosophy and the exercise of contemplation, the heart being the symbol of contemplation and the arms of works." (392 C, D) When one reflects that the heart is more to the left, its symbolic relation to contemplation fits the symbolism of human morphology. (It is interesting to note that Strong's Concordance offers 124 texts mentioning the right hand, 32 in which both are mentioned and only 19 for the left hand.) Martin Buber mentions the right hand as traditionally associated with the middah of grace. "It, and not rigour, is the right hand, the strong hand." Two Types of Faith (London, 1951), p. 153.

b. This is the armor which cannot be shattered, by whose protection Moses rendered the evil Archer ineffectual. (412 B) Note Rom. 13:12, "...the night is far gone, the day is at hand. Let us then cast off the works of darkness and put on the armour of light."

(xi) Ascent

Gen. 28:12

a. And he dreamed that there was a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven; and behold the angels of God were ascending and descending on it.

b. Only spiritual activity has the property of nourishing its own power while expending it; so far from its vigor being lost during exercise it is, rather, increased. That is why we say of the great Moses that, in always going forward, he neither stopped nor set a limit in his climb toward the heights; but having once put his foot to the ladder, "over which God leaned," as Jacob said, he never ceased to climb to a higher rung, forever continuing to rise because each step he occupied upon the heights led him always to another beyond. ¹ (401 B)

Gregory's interpretation of Sacrifice as journey, battle, and ascent

In Gregory's chapter on spectasis, he lists some twenty symbols of Moses' ascent to God. These are conceptualized as steps. Nevertheless, it would be more advantageous to deal principally with all of

1. There are other texts which could be adduced supporting Gregory's further commentary, e.g., Rom. 8:23, 405 B; Eph. 4:14, 405 C; which are noted by Daniélou in both editions '41 and '55; but these texts and commentary do not importantly qualify Gregory's pivotal and original insight quoted above. Gregory's whole thesis stands or falls on the soundness or illusion of this insight into the nature of progress.

the symbols he makes use of in his contemplation rather than to depend upon the above conveniently collated set. Particularly is this so if the basic ideas of sacrifice and its three aspects of journey, battle and ascent are to be traced consistently. Gregory makes use of at least sixty-six symbols to assist him in answering his own question: "Indeed, who knows but what that predisposition which consists in stretching always to reach a greater good is not the perfection of human nature?" (301 C) (This recalls the Greek ideals of excellence and *ἀρετή*.)¹

Gregory thus tells us that before we can profitably engage in this perfection of human nature, namely, stretching always to reach a greater good, there are certain limitations which should be recognized which inhere in the human creature. One of the most critical insufficiencies is man's essential ignorance of God. On the other hand, it is precisely this essential ignorance which permits of an infinite learning process. While one may never know God as he is in himself, one can and should continue to increase one's awareness of him. Since God can never be known, in his essence, objectively, Gregory is quite consistent in applying an exegetical method to Scripture which conforms to this assumption. God is not the sum of natural objects, though his energies inform them. Therefore, says Gregory, it is impossible to take great men as models for there is no exact parallel between historical events and their spiritual interpretation. The passage must be made from the historical to the spiritual because one cannot pass

1. A fruitful study might result from exploring Gregory's ethics as they appear to derive from his original definitions of excellence.

through the same events as did the models. All elements, then, that are not susceptible of application to virtue are necessarily left aside. He even uses the raising of Moses's hands as an illustration of this principle; suggesting that as the people prevailed over the enemy when Moses extended his arms, and they fell before the enemy when Moses dropped them, so the spiritual interpretation of the Law conduces to victory while the literal and material interpretation yields defeat. Also, at the foot of the mountain Moses must climb, the animals are scattered and left behind. They signify sensible knowledge. Preventing them signifies the distinction between the transcendence of the contemplated realities and sensory perception. It is necessary for Moses to separate himself from those who recoil from the ascent. The "ears of the heart" and the "eyes of the heart" are bound up with the doctrine of the spiritual sense. One perceives the spiritual with spiritual organs. Likewise, the holy of holies in the earthly tabernacle holds the truth of the universe forbidden to the fool. One must distinguish clearly between the knowledge of God by external works that concern his attributes, and the incomprehensibility of his *οὐσία*. Through no effort of reason can the divine nature be known, but only as God freely gives the knowledge. The true knowledge of God consists in this, that he transcends all knowledge. By nothing which they know do men assimilate God. The idolatry of concept excludes the knowledge of God. Secrets of the divine are inaccessible to the intelligence (340 C, 372 B, 373 C, 377 C, 380 A, 113n., 388 A, 377 A, 377 B, 384 C, respectively)

This doctrine is less a condemnation of human reason than

an exaltation of divinity. Its implications for the doctrine of Sacrifice will be noted in Chapter IV.

Inasmuch as Gregory chose one particular story, the life of Moses, for his Contemplation, there is profit in tracing the development of his ideas in the sequential order of his commentary. We shall note consecutively his insight into sacrifice, journey, battle and ascent as he uses these ideograms to organize his selection of salient observations around the record of the life of Moses. He is less interested in the pragmatic account of the life than the paradigmatic, deliberately emphasizing those episodes that allow of a treatment most congenial to his purpose.

The Sacrifice

One of the virtues of the Contemplation as a literary work is the tightness of its form. In this respect it resembles a poem and is another indication of that poetic turn of mind which was one of the most fortunate of Gregory's powers. This structure is evident in the general treatment he gives to the idea of sacrifice. One is never left with that painful imbalance seen in some theologies where the action of God is stressed to the virtual denial of human freedom, or contrarily where the action of man is so stressed that revelation is obscured, if not denied. For Gregory, in the Contemplation, the divine and the human are related through mutual sacrifice, i.e., God sacrifices himself in order that man may be, and man sacrifices in order that he may participate in the divine life and that God may manifest himself in human life. Man's being is in God

insofar as man lives and moves, but God's being, as divine life, manifests in man as man wills to participate in the divine life.

The first direct reference to the above point is made by Gregory in relation to the Incarnation. He says we lost being because of "the growing weakness of our will" *ἀβουλία*¹. (381 B) God deigned to be born to our life to bring back to being that which had been lost (fallen away). (381 B) However, as Fr. Daniélou writes in his Introduction, "where the soul participates where it can in the goods without measure, the Word draws it anew, by a renunciation, to the transcendent beauty as if it still had no part in the goods....It goes from beginning to beginning through the beginnings which never end....Finally then, the perfection of the soul is a consenting to the transforming action of God within it." (43-44; italics mine)

Here we have the functional aspect of Gregory's doctrine of perfection. How does one strive continually to reach the greater good? By consenting to the transforming action of God. As will be noted later, one cannot "follow after God" except he consent, that is, exercise his will to be transformed by God. One sacrifices his lesser self in order that his greater self may continually come to be.

Even the sequence of allusion to sacrifice has a balanced alternation in the text: 1) God's sacrifice in Christ: the miracle of the change in the right hand signified the manifestation to men

1. This word has also the sense of want of counsel, thoughtlessness. (Heedlessness?)

of the divine in the flesh of the Saviour (335 D). Also, "when the only begotten of God went from the Father to manifest himself to us, he changed himself into our image...." (336 A); 2) The thornbush is a figure of the flesh; and a man who strips himself of his earthly shroud (fleshly encumbrances) and turns to the light which comes from the Bush becomes capable, from then on, of helping others to save themselves from the tyranny of evil powers (335 C); 3) Gregory sees the redemptive Passion as preexistent in the divine thought (384 D); 4) One who presents his body as a living sacrifice will not overload his soul with a vestment of dense and carnal life, but by purity will render all the actions of his life as light as a spider's web (388 C, D); 5) It is a mistake to try to see God face to face, for this means to say that one possesses him as an object, when he is actually transcendent doubly as essence and as person — and so one finds him, then, in love and in his service (149n.-150n.; 409 A). As will be taken up under discussion of the journey, the figure of one following after God is cardinally important for Gregory's thought. One must sacrifice the false security of following after his own notions of personal direction, preferring in all things to follow after God who leads to 'dread' and glory. Gregory's penchant for paradoxical expression is further indulged in his definition of the servant of God as being superior to all. One cannot serve God without being raised above all the things of this world, nor can he reach the

1. The closeness of the relation between Creator and creature is suggested by making the thornbush a symbol of the flesh. The flesh here becomes as the occasion of a theophany.

blessed end of the virtuous life, the peak of perfection, without his continually dying. (428 B)

These figures relating to the mutual sacrifice of God and man are exemplified in the life of the God-man. Yet it is worth noting that Gregory is never prone to setting up static categories. Rather, his dialectical turn of mind utilizes symbols with great dramatic force. Sacrifice, for Gregory, is not mere renunciation. It implies responsibility for positive action. He takes it for granted that sacrifice creates a field of power for another in and by which that other may act. As noted in the list of primary sacrificial actions in the Creator-creature relationship, the Only-begotten changes himself into our image and one who strips himself of all that encumbers the radiance proceeding from the Bush is empowered to help others achieve their proper freedom. The body, like the thornbush which is a symbol of the flesh, is offered a living sacrifice (cf. perpetual dying) upon which done, his actions are no longer burdensome. That the sacrifice (Passion) is "pre-existent in the divine thought" has important speculative reaches to be noted later.

The Journey

Just as the means to the greater good in terms of sacrifice is consent to be continually transformed by God, so the means to the good in terms of journey is consent to following after God. The Exodus, the 'going out,' has certain relatively structured characteristics; some are taken from the Scriptural account of the Wilderness migration and others depend upon what exegetical use Gregory makes of

the Scriptural images.

It is necessary to face the back of the one followed. Gregory notes that Christ says, "if any one follow me...." not "if any one go before me...." An attempt to stand face to face with the guide results in going in a contrary direction to the one in which he leads. Even when one successfully follows after God, experiencing sublime flights and theophanies full of dread and glory, he is still judged scarcely worthy of this grace. But in following after God he encounters no more the obstacles of sin. God shows his shoulder to the one who follows his trail as the sure way to move toward virtue. (408 D, 412 C) A man's entire life is "a travelling over this world" -- a voyage which can be made in security provided he keeps to the great way which is "trodden" and "washed" by virtue, and never turning aside into the ways and associations that life has to offer which deflect from his course. ¹ (420 C)

Gregory returns to his epistemological doctrine in an effort to indicate the source of power by which one gets underway. "It is necessary to believe in the existence of what one seeks, without thinking that it is exposed to the eyes of everyone; yet knowing it remains forbidden in the hidden reaches of the spirit." The Holy Ghost is the guide on this journey and before one can stand at the foot of the mountain to be ascended, he must dispense with all conception born of opinion and ordinary commerce. Virtue is pure and

1. Daniélou suggests this to be the Aristotelian theory of the 'happy medium.' Perhaps more than prudence is required to avoid the attractions from the right hand and the left.

passes between the faults which it leaves to the sides. (388 A, 361 C, 375 D, 376 D, 420 B)

The chief symbols employed to distinguish basic elements of man's relation to the journey are, 1) shod feet; 2) girdled hips, holding the pleats of the tunic; 3) a rod held in the hand. These conditions are chosen out of the Exodus story in contradistinction to the conditions of the intemperate, the indulgent, and the unwary, who indulge themselves at table with hands free, loose clothes, and feet unshod.

The meal taken on the way must be eaten soberly and quickly. The lamb is roasted on a makeshift fire, eaten hurriedly; the bones and the entrails are left. The bones must not be broken though the leavings will be consumed by the fire.

We are not left with these symbols unexplained. Gregory offers the following scheme which he considers the spiritual sense of the story -- a sense he claims is transparent: 1) Life here is a pilgrimage -- we are hardly born when life pushes us toward the journey; 2) We require equipment for the journey:

Our hands and feet must be protected from the bruises and thorns (sins) of life, from thorns that enter our skin by an invisible opening.

The girdle is a symbol of temperance, indicating reserve and restraint for there must be no abandonment to the pleasures on the way.

The rod is a symbol of the hope upon which our tired souls¹ rest. With it we put to flight our pursuers.

1. One should note that when Gregory speaks of the battle, the rod

The food prepared on the fire signifies the ardent faith with which we nourish ourselves — eating everything to the last fragment. That which is left represents the obscure doctrines (such as what was going on before creation) that curious spirits like. Curiosity is set off from true wisdom. (356 B-357 A)

The pilgrim travels the way accompanied by his wife, who symbolizes the moral and natural philosophies of profane culture. These may come to the aid of those who like them and cultivate them on condition no foreign blemish is retained with them. (336 D)

All hindrances to swift passage are counseled against. The feet must be free of ornaments to facilitate the climb up the mountain. (392 D) One must overcome the inclination to remain to make bricks of mud. All things of earth and water — passions and pleasures of the stomach or the characteristics of riches — a mixture of these elements forms mud and merits the name of it. The brick mould is a symbol of the concupiscible appetite; it is the measure in which the thing desired is satisfied. So soon as emptied, a new desire is born — the emptiness remains. Its contents are destined for the fire. (343 D, 344 A, B)

One must beware of swamps and bogs which spawn impurities. Amphibians have an ambiguous nature, human by birth and animal by inclination. One finds its mark on the table, in bed, closet, and

symbolizes faith, the teaching of the faith, with which one triumphs over the Egyptian serpents. The rod of hope checks the pursuers; that of faith moves forward to overcome the forward opposition. (336 D)

cellar. The cellar signifies the secret reserves and regions of the soul — in the debauched, a pile of toads.¹ (345 B)

There is a dialectic between virtue and sin. Both are ways. Sin advances according to a nasty logic, by a vulgar way, regularly progressing like a series. On the other hand, one who is not side-tracked from the divine resemblance presents a perfect likeness to his archetype; his soul is embellished with incorruptibility, immutability, and immunity. (416 B, 429 A)

In concluding this outline of the fundamental elements used by Gregory in his pointing to the Way, that most original of his contributions will be noted briefly. He explicitly states that the voyage is a figure of the progress in virtue; and the Good has the property of drawing to itself those who raise their eyes to it. As with Jacob's ladder, with each step toward the heights there always emerges one beyond. He writes of a space about him so great that in travelling through it he will never be able to find the end of the path; and yet this path from another point of view is stability. Moses was shown the space and encouraged to run in it. God showed Moses how to run by permitting him to be established in this stability (the rock). (368 B, 401 A, 405 B, D)

The depth of his thought, says Gregory, is to know that the perfect life puts no bound nor limit to progress in perfection; it grows continually toward the better. The vision of God consists in

1. This interpretation may be related to the ancient astrological notion of double-bodied signs signifying carnal and spiritual composition, e.g., Sagittarius (horse-man), Scorpio (serpent-eagle).

this, that whoever raises his eyes to God is made to desire him without ceasing. All desire is stretched in the measure it advances in its course toward Beauty. To follow God is to see him. On the way it is possible to see him; so Moses was taught when looking for God. (425 A, 404 A, D; 409 A) One does not stop and look at God as an object to be observed. God is progressively revealed within the going, the journeying on the way.

One of the most difficult yet wholly intriguing of Gregory's ideas is probably the key to the understanding of his conception of the journey as such. This space in which we may run is the creative power of being (the only-begotten God, the hand of God). (408 C) The stability then, is in just the very hand of God; and the movement appears to be the result of willing, in faith, to be cooperatively related to the creative power of being. Thus is solved — ideogram-matically at least — the problem of stability in perpetual movement. The Hand and the Space are equated with the Rock which, when approached by the rod of faith (cf. forward movement; see note supra, p. 31), becomes a drink to quench the thirst and reaches the interior of those who open themselves to him (the Rock). (368 A)

The Battle

Whereas the journey is realized in the consent to follow after God, who eternally stimulates the desire to follow him in the one who looks toward him, the battle is realized in the consent to join faith with the life according to conscience, the union of which yields virtue. The goal of this life is to be called the servants of God owing to our actions. But one must not traffic in the virtuous life with a

calculating mentality, in the hope of rewards after the manner of slaves. One is permitted to fear only the loss of friendship with the divine. He should esteem only one thing, namely, becoming God's friend. (392 B, 428 B, 429 C, D) Perfection is not only a gnosis¹ -- the highest knowledge of God -- it is also action, the practice of virtues and the apostleship of it is as necessary a part of perfection as is contemplation.² The two shields suspended from the shoulders of the High Priest present symbolically the two faces of armament against the enemy. These faces may be linked to the union of faith and life lived according to conscience. We are taught by the Word that the one who repulses the darts of the wicked one with the two shields will ornament his soul with all the virtues of the patriarchs. (392 B, C) Moses practiced the virtues of firmness in temptation, the pardon of injuries and hope, all virtues which constitute that immutability in the good which restores the soul to the divine immutability. (154n.) The shield of virtue protects from the darts of jealousy. God himself becomes the armour against these arrows and clothes the one who carries the combat with virtue. We are exhorted to clothe ourselves with Jesus Christ. (Rom. 13:14; 412 B)

The theme of faith united with works seems further exemplified

1. Cf. the symbol of following after God in relation to the knowledge of God.

2. This is part of Fr. Daniélou's conclusion to his Introduction and sums up an especially notable feature of Gregory's thought (p. 44).

in Gregory's interpretation of the meaning of the small chains which attach the pectoral ornaments to the arms. They signify the union of the exercise of contemplation with that of practical philosophy -- the heart being the symbol of contemplation and the arms of works. The mitre signifies the crown reserved for those who will have lived well. (392 C, D) A further indication of the wedding of state and act is the admonition to be a friend of the law -- to be such is to be a friend of God. The command to take the sword against brother, friend and neighbor is interpreted as a directive against those interior movements rooted in our soul which work our death, and the death to which works our life. (395 D, 396 A) As already noted, the spiritual interpretation of the Law must be given if the people¹ are to prevail over their common enemy. He who guards himself from evil appetites and turns interiorly toward the good, his soul -- faced toward future goods -- is like a mirror where the images and forms of virtue, presented by God, imprint themselves within the purity of the soul. (340 A, B)

Pharaoh's decree to kill the firstborn indicates that those who engage the battle against their evil inclinations must stop them as soon as they put in their appearance. (353 A) The blood on the doors has a similar significance -- it prevents the destroyer; the true lamb casts aside the first introduction of evil in us...the blood of the lamb on the lintel and pillars represents the precautions taught us by the Law which prevent the killer from introducing himself

1. See supra, p. 25.

interiorly in the first place. (353 C)

The invincible rod of virtue which reduces the rods of the magicians to nothing, does not effect marvels for the sake of throwing onlookers into a stupor. These marvels are worked for the use of those who must be saved and in order to defeat the enemy. (344 C)

He who has, by grace, been struck with the Light, has received a great growth of strength and power against his enemies, is like an athlete who, full of confidence, strips himself in order to engage the fight. With the rod of faith he goes to triumph over the Egyptian serpents. (336 D)

Many souls have welcomed the call to freedom, have been made stronger in the faith by the assaults of the enemy. Others have given over the struggle, collapsed and openly said it were better to disobey the Gospel than to fall into parallel difficulties. (343 C, D)

However, when one has achieved maturity, he no longer engages the battle himself under the orders of Moses (the servant of God), but of God himself, of whom Moses was the servant. (372 A) Further, according to the tradition of the Fathers, Providence was unwilling after the Fall to abandon us to our fallen estate and placed a guardian angel at the side of each of us in order to help us; and the killer of the race employed, likewise, a demon against us. (340 A) Indeed, man in his reasonable and spiritual parts can be called the brother of the angel who appears and comes to assist us when we approach Pharaoh. (340 B)

Gregory uses the names Egyptian and Hebrew to indicate the battle between the powers of good and evil. They indicate the

difference between vice and virtue respectively. He says that if we understand Israelite in the spiritual sense it follows that their children must not be prevented from appearing, but rather those whom it is useful to impede developing. Literally, he notes, the sons of the Israelites are preserved by the sign of blood in order that the good realize itself perfectly, while the future Egyptians are cut off before evil has attained maturity. (356 A, B)

The relation of virtue to the attaining of the knowledge of God is noted by Gregory. He stipulates that in order to receive knowledge of God one must be fortified with heavenly food and have shown vigour in his battle with his adversaries, triumphing over them. The body must be sanctified by lustral sprinklings -- and the clothes also; this means the soul must be wholly purified from both the soilings of soul and body. The exterior must conform to the interior state of the soul.¹ (372 D, 373 C)

The Ascent

As might be expected, the ascent, like so many of Gregory's ideas, is expressed paradoxically. It would not be mutilating his thought to say that the ascent is also a descent, i.e., coming down from the peaks of pride. Pride is, he says, a rise toward the lower (417 A); and so none can serve God without being raised above all things of this world. (428 B)

One might say, then, that the ascent consists in the consent to self-transcendence. Self-transcendence is understood here in a

1. Clothes: the external propriety and occupations of one's life.

special sense and does not refer merely to reflexive consciousness. For Gregory, as for Origen, the ontological character of human being was mutability. That one should consent to the direction of change and that the change ought rather to be toward the divine and not the demonic is central to Gregory's thesis. Self-transcendence has an ontological as well as epistemological reference here.¹ The one who follows Moses to the heights, passing summit after summit in his ascension, rises always beyond himself. (377 D)

Of course, the epistemological doctrine is equally stressed, for the mountain to be climbed is the mountain of the knowledge of God (372 D); and the contemplation of God is exercised neither in the domain of sight nor of hearing, for it escapes even the ordinary activity of the intelligence. One cannot stand at the foot of the mountain until all conceptions born of opinion and ordinary commerce have been dispensed with. Those who try to ascend toward God with but the protection of their sensible (sensory) thoughts -- their clothes unwashed -- will be stoned by their thoughts. Heretical thoughts are a kind of stones which overwhelm their own inventor. (373 D, 373 C)

One must separate himself from those who recoil from the ascent. On reaching the heights his ears hear the sound of trumpets -- the sermon of the deity, becoming stronger to strike the ears in the last day. He penetrates into the hidden and invisible sanctuary of

1. It is worth comparing this idea, of consent to self-transcendence with Kierkegaard's notion of "the despair to become oneself" and its corollary, "the despair not to become oneself," in his The Sickness Unto Death.

knowledge, the knowledge of God. He passes beyond here, taking no rest in this contemplation, into the tabernacle not made with hands of men. This is the proper end to which the soul arrives who is raised by these ascensions. (377 D)

The image of the soul's stretching itself is considered necessarily against the idea of the journey; this union of movements results in both a progress and an ascent. As the soul moves toward the Good -- whose property it is to draw those who raise their eyes toward it -- the very desire of the soul for heavenly things will stretch it, will lead it always higher. Every realization provides it with a new thrust in order to fly higher. Gregory notes that only spiritual activity has this property, that the more it is exercised the more its vigor is augmented. Friendship with God, the perfection of life, is obtained by the spirit's raising itself toward that which is truly great and divine. (401 A, 429 D) Daniélou has an illuminating note here: "the ideal of perfection is the love of friendship for God. Indeed, it is the last word of Gregory. He only recaptures the Platonic idea of contemplation in order to surpass it and to point out the object of perfection beyond all possession of the intelligence, in the ecstatic love by which the soul relates itself wholly to God. This is what will be developed in the commentary on the Canticle which is the normal consequence of our theory." (174n.)

There is one point which requires particular notice. It is Gregory's attitude toward the treasures of 'profane' culture. Our discussion, a part paraphrase of Gregory's text and part commentary may have appeared weighted toward the astringencies of negative

theology; but to leave his ideas on that shelf would quite misrepresent him. In the first place it would not do justice to the intellectual struggle he set himself in attempting to reconcile the glories of paganism with the austerities of a Christianity already well-conditioned to monasticism. He takes particular note how Moses orders the Hebrews to make use of Egyptian wealth. People must not be bereft of the riches of Egypt, or disdainful of the resources of strangers, but take everything belonging to their enemies in order to serve their own use. (360 A, B, C) The problem of such a reconciliation would be of pertinent interest to a dialectical thinker like Gregory and his decision in favor of preserving cultural achievements is all the more impressive against the background of the decline of his cultural heritage. (Perhaps it is not stressed often enough today that such a position as that of Gregory and other Greek Fathers was one requiring singular courage and nicety of distinction.)

Conclusion: The Divine, Divine-human and human
activities and interrelationships in Sacrifice

Gregory's interpretation of the life of Moses suggests two important considerations: 1) the theological commitment which leads him to transpose the Mosaic epic into a thoroughly Christian key, and 2) the combination of his own adventure in the spiritual life with the literature at hand whose categories he could depend upon to express his insights intelligibly.

The first has been demonstrated with documentation in this study. The second is adequately set forth in Daniélou's introduction and footnotes to his translation of the Contemplation. Gregory's

debt to Scripture and the classics must always be borne in mind when studying the Contemplation -- not merely in the interest of sources, but even more significantly when he advances beyond the academical philosophy of his time and ingeniously interprets Scripture. His treatment of the image (Εἰκών), which appears only once in the Contemplation, is especially significant. Coming, as it does, at the end of the work, it stands in a relation of climax to what went before. The image is something to be achieved. In fact, it might be said that the whole purpose and goal of the sacrifice is the continual creation of this image of God -- God's sacrifice, in Christ in order that man might be, and man's sacrifice in order that he might realize his true being as a creature made in the Divine image. One who has achieved this relationship, who truly expresses the image of God carries in him the characters of the image, presenting a perfect likeness with its archetype, having his soul beautified with incorruptibility, immutability, and immunity to all evil.¹ (429 A)

It remains to trace Gregory's teaching of the interrelationships among the Divine, the Divine-human and the human in the sacrifice as he has brought these forward in the Contemplation.

The Sacrifice

The Divine sacrifice is mediated through Christ's manifestation

1. Daniélou's footnote: "Il semble que dans ses premiers ouvrages, Grégoire partageant l'idée plotinienne d'une ressemblance radicale de l'ame avec Dieu, qu'il s'agissait seulement de dégager: De Virg., 372 A.C. Mais déjà dans le De Hominis Opificio il présente la ressemblance avec Dieu comme le but de la vie vertueuse, comme ici" (p. 173n.).

in the flesh of the Saviour. (333 D) The redemptive Passion is pre-existent in the divine thought. (384 D)

The actual 'change' into our flesh through assuming our image becomes the reality of the God-man. (336 A) The thornbush is a prefiguration of the flesh. (333 C)

The human relationship to the above two principles is properly achieved when, 1) man strips himself of earthly encumbrances and turns to the light that comes from the Bush -- thereby becoming an instrument of grace to others (333 C); 2) one must present his body a living sacrifice to God (388 C, D); 3) he (man) must not attempt to see God face to face, i.e., not possess him as an object (409 A); 4) all human notions of personal direction must be sacrificed in the interest of "following after" God and this achieved brings one to where he is raised above all worldly things through his perpetual dying (428 B).

The Journey

On the journey God shows his shoulders to his follower. (408 D, 412 C) The Holy Ghost is the guide upon this journey (361 C) in which the Good has the property of drawing unto itself those who raise their eyes to it (401 A). God progressively reveals himself on the way. (404 A)

The Divine-human ground of the journey is the Rock, the Space in which the pilgrim runs. Indeed, there is no movement forward towards the Divine except he establish himself (within the stability and endlessness of this space, 405 D). It is important to note Gregory's doctrine here, i.e., one's will is properly directed toward

establishment in the Rock and only secondarily toward the movement. One runs successfully only when so established. It is this very fixity which serves or functions like a wing. (405 D) The Rock is Christ. (I. Cor. 10:4; 368 A) Man's relation to the Divine-human creativity is implied clearly in that the Rock, Space, and Hand are equated one with another and so each represents one of these three aspects of the creative power of being,¹ the Course for those who run, and the Abode for those who rest. (408 C)

The human responsibility for the journey is ascetical and stresses: singleness of purpose (420 C); faith in that which is not exposed to the eyes of everyone (it lies within the hidden reaches of the spirit (388 A); dispensing with conceptions grounded on opinion and ordinary commerce (373 D) -- wisdom holds to the mean between the deception of the serpent and the innocence of the dove (420 B). Nevertheless, no negative asceticism is implied because the pilgrim is accompanied by his "wife" -- the moral and natural philosophies of profane culture (336 D).

The Battle

God becomes our armor when we carry the battle with virtue (412 B) and the true Lamb casts aside the first introduction of evil in us. (353 B) The divine Light supplies great growth in strength and power over enemies. (336 D) Further, after the Fall, Providence

1. This suggests further possibilities for studying the relation of the Trinity to man in religious anthropology. Each category has three functions.

placed a guardian angel at our side. (337 D, 340 A)

Jesus Christ, the God-man, is he with whom we clothe ourselves (412 B). His is also the blood which prevents the killer from introducing himself interiorly (353 B), and the heavenly food (bread)¹ which fortifies the one who shows vigour in the battle against his adversaries. (372 D) Both body and clothes must be sanctified by lustral sprinklings in order that the exterior conform to the interior state of the soul. (373 C)

The human involvement in the battle calls for a psychological asceticism. One must not attempt the virtuous life with a slavish hope of reward. To become God's friend is the only thing worthy to be esteemed above everything else, for it is the end of the virtuous life. (428 B, 429 C) Such asceticism properly reflects itself in action — as necessary to perfection as contemplation. Faith and the life lived according to conscience are the two shields that repulse the darts of the wicked and ornament the soul. (392 B, C) The sword is taken to brother, friend and neighbor — expressions which seem to refer to the demonic movements of the soul which have accompanied us since the Fall. (396 A, 340 A, B) The rod of virtue (faith) reduces the rods of the magicians to nothing — miracles worked not in the interest of showmanship but for those who must be saved and the defeat of the enemy. (344 C, 336 D)

The Ascent

The sermon of the Deity in the form of the sound of Trumpets

1. The manna is a figure of the Word (368 C); not especially of the Eucharist, however, as Daniélou notes, p. 100.

meets the climber on his way to penetrate into the hidden sanctuary of the knowledge of God. (377 D) The possibility of his infinite ascent is assured in that the Good draws those who raise their eyes toward it. (401 A)

The tabernacle "net made with hands" symbolizes the pre-existent Word which contains all the spiritual creation. The earthly tabernacle is the Incarnate Word — the head of the Church. (116n.) The goal of our ascent is the entry into this Divine-human existence. (377 D, 381 B, 377 D)

The human participation in the ascent requires one to be prepared always to rise beyond himself (377 D) for the spirit must ceaselessly raise itself toward that which is truly great and divine. (429 D) This "vertical" rise is not without its "horizontal" amplification. Moses ordered the Hebrews to make use of Egyptian wealth and the resources of strangers. (360 A, B, C) This admonition seems to be a healthy check upon any inclination toward a separatist piety and places the responsibility for cultural welfare upon those who otherwise might indulge a mere negative asceticism.

CHAPTER III

SHRI AUROBINDO'S COMMENTARY, ON THE VEDA

As with the preceding chapter, this one is divided into three sections. However, the first section has no direct bearing on anything in Chapter II. The following three sections are structurally comparable with Chapter II and follow the same pattern: 1) Aurebindo's textual adductions from Scripture and his direct commentary upon them. Here a linguistic critique is advanced by comparing Aurebindo's translation of the Rg Veda with Geldner's; 2) Aurebindo's interpretation of the Rg Vedic conception of sacrifice as journey, battle and ascent, introduced by a discussion based upon a summary of the significance of the text adduced; 3) the Divine, Divine-human and human activities in the sacrifice, and conclusion.

If the quotations from Aurebindo are compared with the 1956 edition of On the Veda, it will be observed that I have modified some of his transliteration of Sanskrit to conform with more contemporary spellings and the RV is at all times cited with only Arabic numerals throughout.

The Theory of Vedic Sacrifice according to
Keith's Religion and Philosophy of the Veda

In order to approach Aurebindo's commentary from the perspective of Western Vedic scholarship the following conclusions are presented, and some criticized merely in passing.

Keith sees the sacrifice as one for an individual who himself provides the means for the sacrifice — yet above all is it for the rich rewards of the priests.¹

The worshipper, who cannot exist satisfactorily without the constant help of the gods propitiates them with the giving of gifts. This is the essential standpoint that the sacrificer is assured wealth here and in the world to come on condition of his sacrifice.²

This is called the gift theory. In essence, even the sin offering is a form of the same — the gift inducing the god to spare the guilty man.³

The idea of the power of the sacrifice was in process of steady development. Such declarations as the sun's birth resulting upon the sacrifice of Atharvan (1.83.5); the Angirases win the treasures from the Panis and leads to the doctrine that the Somapresser has great might (1.83.4,3); likewise the greatness of the sacrifice is evident in the sacrifice of the giant Purusha from which were born the hymn and meter of the sacrifice. Finally, the idea that sacrifice is produced by sacrifice is evidence of the shallow mysticism characteristic of the Vedic consciousness.⁴

1. Arthur Berriedale Keith, Religion and Philosophy of the Veda (Cambridge, Mass., 1925), p. 289.

2. Ibid., pp. 258, 17, 259.

3. Ibid., p. 264.

4. Ibid., p. 261 ff. Obviously the reference of mysticism is here differently conceived from that defined in the first chapter of this study.

Keith notices an interesting objection to the gift theory on the part of Jevons who maintains it as unworthy of the relation of god and man. Keith, however, objects to the criticism on the ground that it sets too high a standard for religion's beginnings.¹ On the other hand, Jevons' view that the gift theory is essentially irreligious does seem quite extreme and Keith's suggestion that the presenting of gifts in the hope of favor might mark a primitive form of sacrifice, is worthy of appeal. Nevertheless, his genetic theory is not established any better on that account.

Even though in many rites magic is wholly secondary, the concept of sympathetic magic is obvious and undeniable in the Veda. There was "the puerile desire" to assimilate offerings to the gods, e.g., for Night and Dawn one might require to offer milk from a black cow with a white calf -- this being appropriate. Again, the constant interrelation of magic and religion is shown in its most complete form by the position of the fire.²

1. Ibid., p. 277. Coomaraswamy notes that "the 'appearance of polytheism' is a secondary development in tradition, and this development had already taken place antecedently to the Vedas as we possess them." A New Approach to the Vedas (London, 1933), p. 97n. Could it be that the "shallowness" that Keith sees in the Veda did in part exist, but that it derived from a profounder source -- historically antecedent -- which to the Vedic initiate was not forgotten but rather misapprehended? Perhaps there were many initiates in Vedic times who read or chanted the hymns with an understanding of which we have the barest insight. It is relatively easy to apply the genetic theory of development to historical revelation, e.g., Christianity, Judaism, Islam and Buddhism, but what of Vedic religion which is much more refractory to such analysis?

2. Ibid., pp. 279, 285. What if the "puerile desire" was the prayer to conform the image to the Reality? Surely it is of the essence of

One of the positive contributions made by Keith to the theory of Vedic religion is his conclusion that it is erroneous to view Indo-European worship as that of personifications of nature forces.¹ He clearly sees that what is animate is not impersonal.

Contrary to Keith's is Bloomfield's view that the brahma is "the pantheistic personification of holy thought and its pious utterance."² On the other hand, he is impressed that even though "no literary document in the world teaches as well as the Rig Veda how a personal god develops by personification out of a visible fact in nature," the issue is far from closed insofar as the origin of the Vedic gods is not so clear as was once thought. Nevertheless, the keynote is the worship of the personified powers of nature.³ He recognizes the sacrifice as the dominant note of Vedic life, as indicated by the documents. Yet the sacrifice is noted as "foolish" and "trivial" -- something from which Hindu thought finally emancipated itself. When the foolish sacrifice is cut out there is left that beauty and character which secures the Vedic hymns a place in

religion that it contain the sacramental principle. If one dismiss the magic, he is still left with a hard core of significant gesture. From the human standpoint, gesture may be more basic than the word of speech -- a probability that need not beg the question of the primitive.

1. Ibid., p. 626.

2. Maurice Bloomfield, The Religion of the Veda, p. 40, referring here to the Atharva Veda.

3. Ibid., p. 29.

world literature.

Translation of Rg Veda by Geldner compared with Aurobindo's translation of selected texts from various hymns; followed by Aurobindo's interpretation

Among the many texts selected by Aurobindo, those have been brought forward which deal specifically with 1) the sacrifice; 2) the figures necessary to his interpretation; 3) those that seem to relate to Gregory's symbolism. ² Fifteen selections follow. This relatively small number should not be construed as all that are available. Indeed, throughout the further course of this study many other passages will be adduced. Obviously, were all available examples to be employed, as follows, the thesis would be lengthened immoderately. One interesting general observation of these fifteen

1. Ibid., p. 76. It might be well to observe here that when Scripture is studied from the philological point of view only, it is possible to miss the religious content which is necessary to balanced evaluation of the material from the standpoint of the religious discipline. Bloomfield invites us to concentrate exclusively upon the philological approach to produce a valid statement of religious significance, thus excluding what for the student of religion are much more universal issues; in this case, the religious significance of the sacrifice. All other perspectives, of whatever value, should not usurp the priority of the religious perspective itself, whenever the inquiry is toward religious significance. It goes without saying that much modern scholarship inclines to define religion itself nonreligiously.

If the sacrifice is the central notion in all Vedic ritual, then the religious value and experience must also center in the sacrifice; so must also the poetic value, wherein chant and litany are not here the mere ornaments of religion but rather the expression of its content. From a religious point of view, Bloomfield's criticism skirts the central problem. Further, has Hindu thought ever "emancipated" itself from the sacrifice -- even in its most exalted flights? How could the whole sacramental life-and-world-view of Hinduism (not to say of Brahmanism) have maintained its identity at its highest except it grounded itself in the sacrifice?

2. They have been chosen to indicate Aurobindo's general divagations from traditional Western translations and interpretations as exemplified by K. F. Geldner and R. T. H. Griffith. See especially, pp. 86-96.

selections: Few anthologies of hymns or other studies, etc., include these particular selections. This is not necessarily to minimize their importance in the RV itself, but rather to point out that Vedic scholars turned their attention to other passages which they regarded as perhaps more significant or illustrative of RV religion.

This is the order in which the comparisons will be made:

a) Geldner's text; b) Aurobindo's English translation (also from the Sanscrit); c) Aurobindo's interpretation of the text itself, followed by the page number of the quotation in On the Veda.

7.99.3-4

a. ... (mit diesen Worten) stemmtest du diese beiden Welten auseinander, o Viṣṇu. Du hast allenthalben die Erde mit Pflöcken gefestigt.

Für das Opfer habt ihr beide weiten Raume geschaffen, die ihr Sonne, Morgenrot und Agni erschufet....

b. Thou didst support firmly, O Vishnu, this earth and heaven and uphold the earth all around by the rays (of Surya). Ye two created for the sacrifice (i.e., as its result) the wide other world (urum...u lokam), bringing into being the Sun, the Dawn and Agni.

c. It (the wide world, Swar [Svar]), is described as the result of the sacrifice, the end of our pilgrimage, the vast home to which we arrive, the other world to which those who do well the works of sacrifice attain, sukṛtam u lokam sukṛte (5.4.11). Agni goes as an envoy between earth and heaven and then encompasses with his being this vast home, ksayam bṛhantam pari bhūṣati (3.3.2).

It is a world of bliss and the fullness of all the riches to which the Vedic Rishi aspires:

5.4.11

a. Der Fromme, dem du, Agni Jätavedas, seinen Platz angenehm machen willst, der kommt glücklich zu einem Schatz von Rossen, Söhnen Mannen, Rindern.

b. He for whom, because he does well his works, O Agni Jätavedas, thou wilt to make that other world of bliss, attains to a felicity full of Horses, the Sun, the Heroes, the Cows, all happy being.

c. And it is by the Light that this bliss is attained; it is by bringing to Birth the Sun and the Dawn and the Days that Angirāsas attain to it for the desiring human race; 'Indra who winneth Swar... has made to shine out for man the vision of the days (ketum ahnām) and formed the Light for the great bliss,' avindaj jyotir br̥hate raṇāya (3.34.4; 172-3).

2.21.4

a. Indra der Opferherrliche, erzeugte die Morgenröten, die Sonne.

b. Indra sacrificing well brought to birth the Dawns and Swar.

c. This birth is his birth in conjunction with the Dawn, his birth out of the Night. It is by the sacrifice that this birth takes place -- indrah suyajñā uṣasah svar janat....(2.21.4). It is by human aid that it is done, asmākebhir nṛbhiḥ sūryam sanat, by our "men" he wins the sun (1.100.6); and in many hymns it is described as the result of the work of the Angirāsas [who are invariably associated with Agni, who himself is Angirasa in 1.1.5, the "messenger"], and is

associated with the delivering of the cows or the breaking of the hill." (175)

6.49.11

a. Kommet, ihr jugendlichen, opferwürdigen Seher, ihr Marut, zum Bittgesuch des Sängers. Denn erstarkend belebt ihr auch das Unansehnliche, indem ihr hierher kommt wie zu den Angiras, ihr Herren.

b. O young and seers and powers of the sacrifice, Maruts, come uttering the word to the high place (or desirable plane of earth or hill, adhi sann prāṇeh [4.6.4], which is probably the sense of varasyām), powers increasing rightly moving (on the path, gātu) like the Angirasa, give joy even to that which is not illumined (acitram, that which has not received the varied light of the dawn, the night of our ordinary darkness).

c. Indra, in becoming the Angirasa, becomes marutvān, possessed of or companioned by the Maruts, and these Maruts, luminous and violent gods of the storm and the lightning, uniting in themselves the vehement power of Vayu, the Wind, the Breath, the Lord of Life and the force of Agni, the Seer-Will, are therefore seers who do the work by the knowledge, kavayo vidmanā apasah, as well as battling forces who by the power of the heavenly Breath and the heavenly lightning overthrow the established things, the artificial obstructions, vritrīmāni rodhānsi, in which the sons of Darkness have entrenched themselves, and aid Indra to overcome Vritra and the Dasyus. They seem to be in the esoteric Veda the Life-Powers that support by their nervous or vital energies the action of the thought in the attempt of the mortal consciousness to grow or expand itself into the immortality of the

Truth and Bliss....We see there the same characteristics of the Angirasa action, the eternal youth and force of Agni (agne yaviṣṭha), the possession and utterance of the Word, the seer-hood, the doing of the work of sacrifice, the right movement on the great path which leads, as we shall see, to the world of the Truth, to the vast and luminous bliss. (194-5)

2.24.6-7

a. Sie, die bei ihr Ankunft den im Versteck verborgenen fernsten Schatz der Pani's antrafen, die kundig die Täuschungen entdeckt hatten, sind wieder dahin ausgezogen, von woher sie gekommen waren, um (in den Berg) einzudringen.

Die wahrhaftigen Seher, die die Täuschungen entdeckt hatten, machten sich wieder von da auf die grossen Wege. Sie (fanden) das mit den Armen angefachte Feuer im Fels: "Es ist ja kein fremdes," denn sie hatten es zurückgelassen.

b. They who travel towards the goal and attain that treasure of the Panis, the supreme treasure hidden in the secret cave, they, having the knowledge and perceiving the falsehoods, rise up again thither whence they came and enter into that world. Possessed of¹ the truth, beholding the falsehoods they, seers, kavis rather than ṛsis rise up again into the great path, mahas pathah.

c. ...The Angirasa attain to Swar, - the Truth from which they originally came, the "own home" of all divine Purushas, - by the attainment of the truth and by the detection of the falsehood....The

1. Note that Agni has the insight (kratu) of kavis (1.1.5) as well as being Angirasa.

1

life of man is represented as a sacrifice to the gods, a journey sometimes figured as a crossing of dangerous waters, sometimes as an ascent from level to level of the hill of being, and, thirdly, as a battle against hostile nations. But these three images are not kept separate. The sacrifice is also a journey; indeed the sacrifice itself is described as travelling, as journeying to the divine goal; and the journey and the sacrifice are both continually spoken of as a battle against the dark powers. (207, 208)

7.42.1,2

a. Die Hohenpriester, die Angirasiden, kommen; das Gewieher des davonstürmenden (Renners) soll losgehen. Die im Wasser schwimmenden Kühe erheben ihr Gebrüll; die beiden Presssteine sollen die Zierde des Opfers anschirren.

Dein vor alters aufgefundenener Weg ist gangbar, Agni. Schirre bei ausgepresstem Soma deine falben und rötlichen Stuten oder die männerfahrenden Fische, die du im Stall hast, an! Ich rufe (auf meinen Platz) sitzend der Götter Geschlechter an.

b. Forward let the Angirasas travel, priests of the Word, forward go the cry of heaven (or of the heavenly thing, cloud or lightning), forward move the fostering Cows that diffuse their waters, and let the two pressing stones be yoked (to their work) — the form of the pilgrim sacrifice, pra brahmāṅgo angiraso nakṣanta, pra kṛandanur nabhanyasya vetu; pra dhenava udapruto navanta, yujatām adri adhvarasya

1. But a sacrifice of man (puruṣa) by the gods in RV 10.90.

peśah. (7.42.1, in full)

Easy of travelling for thee is the path, O Agni, and known to thee from of old. Yoke in the Soma-offering thy ruddy (or, actively-moving) mares which bear the hero. Seated I call the births divine.

c. What path is this? It is the path between the home of the gods and our earthly mortality down which the gods descend through the antarikṣa, the vital regions, to the earthly sacrifice and up which the sacrifice and man by the sacrifice ascends to the home of the gods. Agni yokes his mares, his variously-colored energies or flames of the divine Force he represents, which bear the Hero, the battling power within us that performs the journey. And the births divine are at once the gods themselves and those manifestations of the divine life in man which are the Vedic meaning of the godheads. That this is the sense becomes clear from the fourth Rik. "When the Guest that lodges in the bliss has become conscious in knowledge in the gated house of the hero rich (in felicity), when Agni is perfectly satisfied and firmly lodged in the house, then he given the desirable good to the creature that makes the journey" or, it may be, for his journeying.

The hymn is therefore an invocation to Agni for the journey to the supreme good, the divine birth, the bliss. And its opening verse is a prayer for the necessary conditions of the journey, the things that are said here to constitute the form of the pilgrim sacrifice, adhvarasya peśah, and among these comes first the forward movement of the Angirases;...The Angirases with the divine Word, the cry of Heaven which is the voice of Swar, the luminous heaven,

and of its lightnings thundering out from the Word, the divine waters or seven rivers that are set free to their flowing by that heavenly lightning of Indra the master of Swar, and the outflowing of the divine waters the outpressing of the immortalizing Soma, these constitute the form, peśah of the adharva yaṁa. And its general characteristic is forward movement, the advance of all to the divine goal, as emphasized by the three verbs of motion, nakṣanta, vetu navanta and the emphatic pra, forward, which opens and sets the key to each clause. (214, 215)

2.76.1

a. Savitr, der Allermans-Gott hat das für alle Völker bestimmte unsterbliche Licht aufgesteckt. Das Auge der Götter ist nach deren Ratschluss erstanden; Uṣas hat die ganze Welt enthüllt.

b. Savitri, the god, the universal male, has ascended into the Light that is immortal and of all the births, jyotir amṛtam viśvajanyam; by the work (of sacrifice) the eye of the gods has been born (or, by the will-power of the gods vision has been born); Dawn has manifested the whole world (or, all that comes into being, all existences, viśvam bhuvanam).

c. The result of this birth of divine vision is that man's path manifests itself to him and those journeyings of the gods or to the gods (devayānāḥ) which lead to the infinite wideness of the divine existence. "Before me the paths of the journeyings of the gods have become visible, journeyings that violate not, whose movement was formed by the Vasus. The eye of Dawn has come into being in front and she has come towards us (arriving) over our houses."

(7.76.2) The house in the Veda is the constant image for the bodies that are dwelling-places of the soul, just as the field or habitation means the planes to which it mounts and in which it rests. The path of man is that of his journey to the supreme plane and that which the journeyings of the gods do not violate is...the workings of the gods, the divine law of life into which the soul has to grow.
(223-4)

1.71.3

a. Sie stellten das Gesetz fest, sie brachten die Erkenntnis diesses in Umlauf. Seitdem sind die begehrliehen (Gedanken) des Nebenbuhlers (wie) Kinder, die noch getragen werden. Nur die gierlesen (Gedanken) des geschickten (Sängers) gehen zu (ihnen), indem sie das Geschlecht der Götter mit Labsal stärken.

b. They held the truth, they enriched its thought; then indeed, aspiring souls (aryaḥ), they, holding it in thought bore it diffused in all their being, dadhann ṛtaṁ dhanayann asya dhītim, ād id aryo didhiṣvo vibhṛtrāḥ. The doers of the work go towards the unthirsting (waters) which increase the divine births by the satisfaction of delight, atṛṣyantīr apaso yanty acchā, devān janma prayasā vardhayanti.

c. The image in vibhṛtrāḥ suggests the upholding of the thought of the Truth in all principles of our being or, to put it in the ordinary Vedic image, the seven headed thought in all the seven waters, apsu dhiyam dhiṣe, as we have seen it elsewhere expressed in almost identical language;...The sevenfold Truth-consciousness in the satisfied sevenfold Truth-being increasing the divine births in us by the satisfaction of the soul's hunger for Beatitude, this is

the growth of immortality. It is the manifestation of that trinity of divine being, light and bliss which the Vedantins afterwards called Sachchid-ananda (saccidānanda). (228)

1.68.1-5

a. (Die Schmalzlöffel) mischend steigt er eilfertig den Himmel. Was geht und steht, die Nächte deckt er auf — da er allein aller dieser Götter (Grösse) er, der Gott, mit seiner Grösse umspannt.

Da erfreuten sich alle deines Rates, als du Gott lebend aus dem trocknen (Holze) geboren wurdest — Alle erlangten göttlichen Rang, (göttlichen) Namen, die Wahrheit pflegend unsterblichen (Namen) durch ihren Eifer.

Die Mahnungen der Wahrheit, die Erkenntnis der Wahrheit (haben es bewirkt): Alle haben zeitlebens die Werke (der Wahrheit) vollbracht....

b. (Paraphrase): Agni, the divine Seer-Will, is described as ascending to heaven and unrolling the veil of the nights from all that is stable and all that is mobile. (Translation): When he becomes the one God encompassing all these godheads with the greatness of his being. Then indeed all accept and cleave to the Will (or the Work) when, O godhead, thou art born a living soul from the dryness (i.e., from the material being, the desert, as it is called, unwatered by the streams of the Truth); all enjoy godhead attaining to the truth and the immortality by their movements, bhājanta viśve devatvam nāma, ṛtam sapanto amṛtam evaiḥ. The impulse of the Truth, the thinking of the Truth becomes a universal life (or pervades all the life) and in it all fulfil their workings, ṛtasya preṣā ṛtasya

dhītir, viśvāyur viśve apāṃsi cakruh.

c. Aurobindo considers these Riks as further elucidation on "The sense of this universal diffusion of Truth and the birth and activity of all the godheads in us assuring an universal and immortal life in place of our present limited mortality...."¹
(228-9)

4.1.9-19

a. Als der Opfergenosse des Manu erleuchtet er (die Menschen). Ihn führen sie (zum Altar) am grossen Leitseil. Er wohnt, (die Opfer) ausrichtend, in dessen Behausung. Der Gott hat Gütergemeinschaft, mit den Sterblichen erlangt.

Deiser Agni soll uns doch, (des Weges) kundig, zu dem gottgeschenkten Kleinod führen, das ihm gehört, das alle Unsterblichen, der Vater und Erzeuger Himmel, nach (deinem) Sinne wahr machten, du Stier.

Er ward zuerst in den Flüssen geboren, im Grunde des grossen, im Schosse dieses Dunkelraumes, ohne Füsse, ohne Kopf, seine beiden Enden versteckend im Neste des Stieres, (die Glieder) einziehend.

Zuerst kam unter lautem Beifall die Schar hervor im Schosse des Gesetzes, im Neste des Stiers, die ersohnte, jugendliche, stattliche erstralende. Dem Bullen wurden die sieben Freunde geboren.

Unsere menschlichen Väter setzen sich dazu hin, indem sie sich für das Rechte ereiferten. Die im Fels eingepferchten gutmilchenden Kühe in der Höhle trieben sie heraus, die morgenröten anrufend.

1. Fr. Daniélou notes Gregory's doctrine of ἀποκατάστασις which he thinks signifies for Gregory the total salvation of humanity as "human nature" without determining what this means in relation to the individual human being. (79n.)

Sie putzten sich, nachdem sie den Fels aufgesprengt hatten. Andere erzählten allenthalben diese (Tat) von ihnen. Als ihre Herde der Schranken ledig war, sangen sie den Siegesgesang; sie fanden das Licht (nachdem), sie in ihren Gedanken darnach verlangt hatten.

Das Herz voll Verlangen nach Kühen haben die Männer, die Uáj, den festen, zugesperzten, Fels, der die Rinder festhielt und umschloss, den befestigten Rinderpferch mit göttlichem Wort erschlossen.

Sie erinnerten sich an den ersten Namen der Kuh, sie fanden die dreimal sieben höchsten (Namen) der Mutter. Diesen verstehend antworteten, die lockenden Kühe mit Gebrüll. Die Morgenröte kam zum Vorschein mit dem, was die Zierde der Kuh ausmacht.

Es verschwand die hartnäckige Finsternis, der Himmel erglänzte, das Licht der göttlichen Morgenröte brach hervor, die Sonne beschritt die hohen Gefilde, Rechtes und Schlechtes in den Menschen schauend.

Da, als sie hernach erwacht waren, blickten sie um sich; da hielten sie das himmelgeschenkte Kleinod fest: 'Alle götter sind in allen Häusern.' Dem Wunsche soll Erfüllung werden, o Mitra und Varuna!

Ich möchte den brennenden Agni herbitten als Hotr der die ganze Last trägt und am besten opfert. Er zapfte gleichsam das reine Euter der Kühe an, das lauter wie der eingeschenkte Saft des Stengels! (Note: Des Soma.)

Note: In the following translation of Aurobindo's, a different order will be pursued. His commentary will, in this case, be more

readily followed if it is set forth here as it is in the text. It will be interspersed among the ten verses; the eleventh verse (19) will be followed by no interpretation.

- c. It is to Agni the Seer-Will that Vamadeva's opening hymns are addressed. He is hymned as the friend or builder of man's sacrifice who awakes him to the vision, the knowledge (ketu),
- b. sa cetayan manuṣo yajna -bandhuh (4.1.9); so doing, "he dwells in the gated homes of this being, accomplishing; he, a god, has come to be the means of accomplishment of the mortal," sa kṣety asya duryāsu sādhan, devo martasya sadhanitvam āpa.
- c. What is it that he accomplishes? The next verse tells us.
- b. "May this Agni lead us in his knowledge towards that bliss of him which is enjoyed by the gods, that which by the thought all the immortals created and Dyanspitā the father out-pouring the Truth"; sa tū no agnir nayatu pra-jānann acchā ratnaṁ deva-bhaktaṁ yad asya; dhiyā yad viśve amṛtā akṛtvā, dyanspitā
- c. janitā satyam ukṣan. This is Parashara's beatitude of the Immortality created by all the powers of the immortal godhead doing their work in the thought of the Truth and in its impulsion, and the outpouring of the Truth is evidently the out-pouring of the waters as is indicated by the word ukṣan, Parashara's equal diffusion of the seven rivers of the truth over the hill.

Vamadeva then goes on to tell us of the birth of this great, first or supreme force, Agni, in the Truth, in its waters, in

- b. its original home. "He was born the first in the waters, in the foundation of the vast world (Swar), in its womb (i.e., its seat and birthplace, its original home); without head and feet, concealing his two extremities, setting himself to his work in the lair of the Bull" (Rik 11).
- c. The Bull is the Deva or Purusha, his lair is the plane of the Truth, and Agni the Seer-Will, working in the Truth-consciousness, creates the worlds; but he conceals his two extremities, his head and feet; that is to say, his workings act between the superconscient and the subconscient in which his highest and lowest states are respectively concealed, one in an utter light, the other in an utter darkness. From that he goes forth as the first and supreme force and is born to the Bull or the Lord by the action of the seven powers of Bliss,
- b. the seven Beloved. "He went forward by illumined knowledge as the first force, in the seat of the Truth, in the lair of the Bull, desirable, young, full in body, shining wide; the seven Beloved bore him to the Lord" (Rik 12).
- c. The Rishi then comes to the achievement of the human fathers, asmākam atra pitaro manṣyā, abhi pra sedur ṛtam ānuṣṭup:
- b. "Here our human fathers seeking possession of the Truth went forward to it; the bright cows in their covering prison, the good milkers whose pen is in the rock they drove upward (to the Truth), the Dawns answered their call. They rent the hill asunder and made them bright; others all around them declared wide this (Truth) of theirs; drivers of the herds they sang the hymn to

the door of works (Agni), they found the light, they shone in their thoughts (or, they accomplished the work by their thoughts). They with the mind that seeks the light (the cows, gavyatā manasā [4.1.15]) rent the firm and compact hill that environed the luminous cows; the souls that desire opened by the divine word, vacasā daivyena (4.1.15), the firm pen full of the kine" (Riks

- c. 13, 14, 15). These are the ordinary images of the Angiras legend, but in the next verse Vamadeva uses a still more mystic language.
- b. "They conceived in mind the first name of the fostering cows, they found the thrice seven supreme (seats) of the Mother; the females of the herd knew that and they followed after it; the ruddy one was manifested by the victorious attainment (or the splendour) of the cow of Light," te manvata prathamam nāma dhenos triḥ sapta mātub paramāṇi vindan; taj jānatīr abhyanūṣata vrā, āvirbhuvad
- c. arunair yaśasā goh. The Mother here is Aditi, the infinite consciousness, who is the Dhenu or fostering Cow with the seven rivers for her sevenfold streaming as well as Gau the Cow of Light with the Dawns for her children; the Ruddy One is the divine Dawn and the herd or rays are her dawning illuminations. The first name of the Mother with her thrice seven supreme seats, that which the dawns or mental illuminations know and move towards, must be the name or deity of the supreme Deva, who is the infinite being and infinite consciousness and infinite bliss, and the seats are the three divine worlds, called earlier in the hymn the three
1
supreme births of Agni, Satya, Tapas, and Jana of the Purāṇas,

1. Jāna?

which correspond to these three infinities of the Deva and each fulfills in its own way the sevenfold principle of our existence: thus we get the series of thrice seven seats of Aditi manifested in all her glory by the opening out of the Dawn of Truth. Thus we see that the achievement of the Light and Truth by the human fathers is also an ascent to the Immortality of the supreme and divine status, to the first name of the all-creating infinite Mother, to her thrice seven supreme degrees of this ascending existence, to the highest levels of the eternal hill (sānu, adri).

- This immortality is the beatitude enjoyed by the gods of which Vamadeva has already spoken as the thing which Agni has to accomplish by the sacrifice, the supreme bliss with its thrice seven ecstasies (1.20.7). For he proceeds: "Vanished the darkness, shaken in its foundation; Heaven shone out (rocata dyauh, implying the manifestation of the three luminous worlds of Swar, divo rocanāni; upward rose the light of the light of the divine Dawn; the Sun entered the vast fields (of the Truth) beholding the straight things and the crooked in mortals. Thereafter indeed they awoke and saw utterly (by the sun's separation of the straight from the crooked, the truth from the falsehood); then indeed they held in them the bliss that is enjoyed in heaven, ratnam dhārayanta dyubhaktam. Let all the gods be in all our homes, let there be the truth for our thought, O Mitra, O Varuna," viśvé viśvasu duryāsu devā mitra dhiye varuna satyam astu (Riks 17, 18).
- c. This is evidently the same idea as has been expressed in different language by Parashara Shaktya, the pervasion of the whole existence

by the thought and impulse of the Truth and the working of all the godheads in that thought and impulsion to create in every part of our existence the bliss and the immortality.

- b. The hymn closes thus: "May I speak the word toward Agni shining pure, the priest of the offering, greatest in sacrifice who brings to us the all; may he press out both the pure udder of the Cows of Light and the purified food of the plant of delight (the Soma) poured out everywhere. He is the infinite being of all the lords of sacrifice (the gods) and the guest of all human beings; may Agni, accepting into himself the increasing manifestation of the gods, knower of the births, be a giver of happiness" (Rik 19, 232-235).

4.2.12-15

a. Die untrüglichen Seher haben den Seher unterwiesen, als sie ihn in die Wohnung des Äyu verpflanzten. Von da aus mögest du Agni, an den Füßen dieser sichtbaren (Absichten) und an dem Eifer der hohen Herrn seine geheimen (Absichten) ansehen. Bring du jüngster Agni, der du ein guter Führer bist, dem Priester, dem Verehrer, der Soma gepresst hat, dem, der den Opferdienst besorgt hat, du (Schenk) lustiger, einen breiten, blinkenden Schatz, um (ihm) zu helfen, die Völker (mit Ruhm) erfüllend.

Und (in allem) was wir, o Agni, deine twegen mit Füßen, Händen und Leibern gemacht haben, mit der Arme Arbeit wie die, die einen Wagen machen, haben die Frommgesinnten an dem Rechte festgehalten, sich dafür ereifernd.

Und wir möchten als die sieben Sänger von der Mutter Ugas

geboren werden als die ersten Meister unter den Männern. Wir möchten des Himmels Söhne, die Angiras' werden und inbrünstig den Fels mit dem Schatz erbrechen.

b. "The seers unconquered declared the Seer (the Deva, Agni) holding him within (in the homes of the human being) mayst thou, O Agni, aspiring by the work (aryah), behold by thy advancing movements these of whom thou must have the vision, the transcendent ones (the godheads of the Deva)"; kavim śasāsuh kavayo a'dabdhāḥ, nidhārayanto duryāsv āyah; atas tvam drśyān agna etān, padbhiḥ paśyer adbhutān arya evaḥ (Rik 12).

c. This is again the journey to the vision of the godhead.

b. "Thou, O Agni, youngest power, art the perfect guide (on that journey) to him who sings the word and offers the Soma and orders the sacrifice; bring to the illumined who accomplishes the work the bliss with its vast delight for his increasing, satisfying the doer of the work (or, the man, carganiprah). Now, O Agni, of all that we have done with our hands and our feet and our bodies the right thinkers (the Angirasas) make as it were thy chariot by the work of the two arms (Heaven and Earth, bhurijah); seeking to possess the Truth they have worked their way to it (or won control of it)," rtam yemuh sudhya śśuṣṣāṇāḥ (Riks 13, 14).

"Now as the seven seers of Dawn, the Mother, the supreme disposers (of the sacrifice), may we beget for ourselves the gods; may we become the Angirasas, sons of Heaven, breaking open the wealth-

c. filled hill, shining in purity" (Rik 15). We have here very clearly the seven divine Seers as the supreme ordainers of the

world-sacrifice and the idea of the human being "becoming" these seven seers, that is to say, creating them in himself and growing into that which they mean, just as he becomes the Heaven and Earth and the other gods or, as it is otherwise put, begets or creates or forms (ian, ky, tan) the divine births in his own being (237-8).

3.31.3-5

a. Agni wurde mit der Zunge zitternd geboren, um die Söhne des grossen Rötlichen zu verehren. Gross war die Leibesfrucht, gross auch dieser Geburt, gross die Erbauung des Falbenlenkers (Indra) durch die Opfer.

Dem streiter schlossen sich die siegreichen (Scharen?) an; sie fanden das grosse Licht aus dem Dunkel heraus. Die Morgenröten erkannten ihn und kamen ihm entgegen aus (der Höhle). Indra wurde der alleinige Besitzer der Kühe.

Die Weisen bahnten den Weg zu den in der Feste weilenden (Kühen), mit vorwärtsstrebendem Sinne trieben die sieben Wortführer zur Eile. Sie fanden jeden richtigen Weg. Der Kundige hat (seitdem) mit seiner Anbetung diese eingeschlagen.

b. Agni the (Divine Force) is born quivering with his flame of the offering for sacrifice to the great Sons of the Shining One (the Deva, Rudra); great is the child of them, a vast birth; there is a great movement of the Driver of the shining steeds (indra, the Divine Mind) by the sacrifices. The conquering (dawns) cleave to him in his struggle, they deliver by knowledge a great light out of the darkness; knowing the Dawns rise up to him, Indra has become the

one lord of the luminous cows. The cows who were in the strong place (of the Panis) the thinkers clove out; by the mind the seven seers set them moving forward (or upwards towards the supreme), they found the entire path (goal or field of travel) of the Truth; knowing those (supreme seats of the Truth) Indra by the obeisance entered into them, vīṇau satīr abhi dhīrā atṛndan prācā ahinvan manasā sapta viprāḥ; viśvām avindam pathyām ṛtasya, prajānann it tā namasā viveśa (Rike 3, 4, 5).

c. This is, as usual, the great birth, the great light, the great divine movement of the Truth-knowledge with the finding of the goal and the entry of the gods and the seers into the supreme planes above (246-7).

1.72.1-10

a. An Sehergabe stellt er alle Meister in Schatten, der viele Mannes (Kräfte) in der Hand hält. Agni ward der Herr der Reichtümer, der aller unsterblichen (Kräfte) insgesamt sich an-gesignet hat.

Bei uns fanden alle weisen Unsterblichen suchend den nicht, der das Kalb gefangen hielt. Sich mühend, seine Spur verfolgend, sinnend machten sie Halt bei der entferntesten Spur, bei der teuren (Spur) des Agni.

Dah dich, den Reinen, o Agni, die Reinen drei Herbste lang mit Schmalz ehrten, haben sie sich selbst opferwürdige Namen erworben und ihre Leiber vervollkommnet, die Edelgeborenen.

Bei beiden hohen Rodasi (Himmel und Erde) Gehör finden haben sich die opferwürdigen Rudrasöhne an die Spitze gesetzt.

Ein Sterblicher fand den Agni, als sie sich geteilt hatten, und entdeckte ihn, als er an der fernsten Spur sich aufhielt.

Eines Sinnes geworden nahten sie kniebeugend mit ihren Gattinnen und huldigten ihm, dem Huldigung gebührt. Nachdem sie die (bisherigen) Leiber aufgegeben hatten, nahmen sie die ihrigen an, indem ein Freund wachte, während der Freund die Augen schloss.

Seit die Opferwürdigen die dreimal sieben geheimen Worte, die bei dir verborgen waren, gefunden hatten, bewachen sie einträchtig mit diesen den Unsterblichen. Hüte du die Tiers und alles was steht und geht!

Agni! Der du die Wege der Völker kennst, teile die Gaben der Reihe nach aus zum Leben! Du wardst der unermüdliche Bote, der Opferfahrer, der die von Göttern begangenen Pfade herauskennt.

In guter Absicht (brachten) sie die sieben jüngsten (Ströme) des Himmels; sie machten die Tore des Reichtums ausfindig, des rechten Weges kundig. Saramā fand die eingeschlossene Kuhherde, von der noch jetzt der menschliche Stamm zehrt.

Während sie lauter gute Nachkommenschaft erlangten und sich zur Unsterblichkeit den Weg bereiteten, hat sich die Erde von den am Macht Grossen getrennt, die Mutter von ihren Söhnen, die Aditi um den Vogel zu nähren.

Sie Verliehen ihm schöne Fracht, als die Unsterblichen die beiden Augen des Himmels schufen. Nun fliessen sie losgelassen wie die Ströme; die abwärts fliessenden (Schmalz^{güsse}?) fanden den Weg zu den rötlichen (Flammen) o Agni.

b. He has created within, the seer-knowings of the eternal

Disposer of things, holding in his hand many powers (powers of the divine Purushas, naryā purūṇi); Agni creating together all immortalities becomes the master of the (divine) riches. All the immortals, they who are not limited (by ignorance), desiring found him in us as if the Calf (of the cow, Aditi) existing everywhere; labouring, travelling to the Seat, holding the Thought they attained in the supreme seat to the Shining (glory) of Agni. O Agni, when through the three years (three symbolic seasons or periods corresponding perhaps to the passage through the three mental heavens) they, pure, had served thee, the pure one, with the ghṛta, they held the sacrificial names and set moving (to the supreme heaven) forms well born. They had knowledge of the vast heaven and earth and bore them forward, they the sons of Rudra, the lords of the sacrifice, the mortal awoke to vision and found Agni standing in the seat supreme. Knowing perfectly (or in harmony) they kneeled down to him, they with their wives (the female energies of the gods) bowed down to him who is worthy of obeisance; purifying themselves (or, perhaps, exceeding the limits of heaven and earth) they created their own (their proper or divine) forms, guarded in the gaze, each friend of the Friend. In thee the gods of the sacrifice found the thrice seven secret seats hidden within; they, being of one heart, protect by them the immortality. Guard thou the herds that stand and that which moves. O Agni, having knowledge of all manifestations (or births) in the worlds (or, knowing all the knowledge of the peoples) establish thy forces, continuous for life. Knowing, within, the paths of the journeying of the gods thou becamest their

sleepless messenger and the bearer of the offerings. The seven mighty ones of heaven (the rivers) placing aright the thought, knowing the Truth, discerned the doors of Felicity; Saramā found the fastness, the wideness of the cows whereby now the creature enjoys (the supreme riches). They who entered upon all things that bear right issue, made the path to Immortality; by the great ones and by the greatness earth stood wide; the mother Aditi with her sons came for the upholding. The immortals planted in him the shining glory, when they made the two eyes of heaven (identical probably with the two vision powers of the Sun, the two horses of Indra); rivers as it were, flow down released; the shining ones (the cows) who were here below knew, O Agni.

c. So runs this hymn of Parashara, translated with the utmost literalness even at the cost of some uncouthness in the English. It is clear at the very first glance that it is throughout a hymn of knowledge, of the Truth, of a divine Flame which is hardly distinguishable from the supreme Deity, of immortality, of the ascent to the gods, the divine powers, by the sacrifice to their godhead, to their supreme names, to their proper forms, to the shining glory of the supreme state with its thrice seven seats of the Godhead. Such an ascent can have no other meaning than the ascent of the divine powers in man out of their ordinary cosmic appearances to the shining Truth beyond, as indeed Parashara himself tells us that by this action of the gods mortal man awakens to the knowledge and finds Agni standing in the supreme seat and goal; vidam marto nemadhitā, cikityān, agnim pade parame tasthivānsam (249-51).

6.39.1-4

a. Von dem ergöt^hzenden (Soma), dem himmlischen Seher und Wortführer, der die Gebete bere^hdt macht, von dem redseligen sü^hssen, von diesem treuen Gefährten hast du Gott bei uns getrunken. Gib dem Säng^her Speiseg^henüsse mit Rindern an der Spitze zu eigen!

Dieser hat begeirig den die Klü^hhe um (schliessenden) Fels (gesprengt) mit den das Rechte Erkennenden verbündet mit dem Recht im Bunde. Er erbrach den ungebrochenen (Berg) rücken des Vala. Mit Worten bekämpfte Indra die Panis.

Dieser Saft hat die unerhellten N^hächte erhellt, abends und morgens (alle) Herbste, o Indra. Diesen haben sie für immer zum Wahrzeichen der Tage gemacht; er schuf die reingeborenen Ugas'.

Dieser erleuchtete leuchtend die lichtlosen (Welten); dieser hat zu rechter Zeit die vielen (Morgan) scheinen lassen. Dieser fährt mit den rechtzeitig geschirrten Rossen, mit der sonnebringenden Nabe die Länder erfüllend.

b. Of this divine and rapturous seer (Soma), bearer of the sacrifice, this honeyed speaker with the illumined thought, O god, join to us, to the speaker of the word the impulses that are led by the cows of light (iso...goagrāh). He it was who desired the shining ones (the cows, usrāh) all about the hill, truth-yoked, yoking his car with the thoughts of the Truth, rtadhītibhir rtayug yu.jānah; (then) Indra broke the unbroken hill-level of Vala, by the words he fought against the Panis. He it was (Soma) who as the Moon-Power (Indu) day and night and through the years made the lightless nights to shine out, and they held the vision of the days; he

created the dawns pure in their birth. He it was becoming luminous who made full of light the lightless ones; he made the many (dawns) shine by the Truth, he went with horses yoked by the truth, with the wheel that finds Swar satisfying (with the wealth) the doer of works.

c. The Panis are the withholders of the thoughts of the Truth, dwellers in the darkness without knowledge (tamo avayunam) which Indra and the Angirases by the Word, by the Sun replace with Light to manifest in its stead the wideness of the Truth. It is not with physical weapons but with words that Indra fights the Panis (6.39,2), paññir vacobhir abhi yodhad indrah....

It is always the thought, the Truth, the word that is associated with the Cows of the Panis; by the words of Indra, the Divine Mind Power, those who withhold the cows are conquered; that which was dark becomes light; the chariot drawn by the horses yoked by the Truth finds (by knowledge, svarvidā nābhinē [6.39.4]) the luminous vastness of being and consciousness and delight now concealed from our vision. "By the brahma Indra pierces Vala, conceals the darkness, makes Swar visible (2.24.3)," ud gā ājad abhinad brahmaṇā valam agūhat tamo vyacakṣayat svah.

The whole Rig-veda is a triumph-chant of the powers of Light, and their ascent by the force and vision of the Truth to its possession in its source and seat where it is free from the attack of the falsehood (264-5).

1.83.4-5

a. Da erlangten die Angiras' die erste Jugendkraft, die das Feuer unter Opferdienst und frommen Werk entzündet hatten. Sie fanden

die ganze Nahrung des Pani beisammen; die Männer (trieben) die Ross- und Rinderherde heim.

Durch Opfer hat Atharvan zuerst die Wege gebahnt; daraus ward Sūrya, der Hüter des Gesetzes, der Späher geboren. Uśanas Kāvya trieb gleichzeitig die Rinder ein. Wir verehren das unsterbliche Geschlecht des Yama.

b. The Angirasa held the supreme manifestation (of the Truth), they who had lit the fire, by perfect accomplishment of the work; they gained the whole enjoyment of the Pani, its herds of the cows and the horses. Atharvan first formed the Path, thereafter Sūrya was born as the protector of the Law and the Blissful One, tataḥ sūryo vratapā vena ājani. Ushanas kavya drove upward the Cows. With them may we win by the sacrifice the immortality that is born as a child to the Lord of the Law, yamasya jātam amṛtam yajāmahe.

c. The lords of the ignorance have to be slain or enslaved to the Truth and its seekers, but their wealth is indispensable to the human fulfilment....Angirasa is the Rishi who represents the Seer-Will, Atharvan is the Rishi of the journeying on the Path, Ushanas Kāvya is the Rishi of the heavenward desire that is born from the seer-knowledge. The Angirasa win the wealth of illuminations and powers of the Truth concealed behind the lower life and its crookednesses; Atharvan forms in their strength the Path and Sūrya the Lord of Light is then born as the guardian of the divine Law and the Yama power; Ushanas drives the herded illuminations of our thought up that path of the Truth to the Bliss which Sūrya possesses; so is born from the law of the Truth the immortality to which the Aryan

soul by its sacrifice aspires. (275, 276)

Summary of Aurebindo's interpretation
of the Rg Vedic conception of sacrifice

Summary of elements in texts adduced

In the following, the principal images of essential significance to this study will be collected and defined. To make an exhaustive comparison of the differences in translation between Aurebindo and Geldner would not directly aid this study; however, it perhaps should be remarked that Aurebindo is well aware that his translation derives from both his own religious experience in relation to the images of the Veda, and his own "philological theory." The wide difference between Aurebindo and Geldner is, of course, apparent when reading supra, pp. 52-77.

In relating some of the images that seem of principal importance to Aurebindo, the over-all structure of his thought has been kept in mind: the polarity of the Divine and demonic; the struggle between the two, and the eventual triumph of gods and men over the demons, the Panis and Vṛtras -- all the Dasyus.

(i) Swar

The world of bliss and fullness of riches toward which the Vedic Rishi aspires; the result of the sacrifice and of our pilgrimage, attained by those who do the works of the sacrifice well.

(7.99.4; 172)

(ii) Light (Sun, Dawn, Days)

Formed for man by Indra. By the Light, bliss is attained;

1. As usual the RV reference will be followed by the page number of On the Veda when both references are offered, e.g., 7.99.4; 172.

the Angirasa attain to Light for the sake of the human race.

(3.34.4; 5.4.11; 172-3)

(iii) Cry of heaven

The voice of Swar -- the luminous heaven (not to be confused with the ordinary heaven coupled with earth). The 'cry' is associated with the divine Word; it thunders out lightnings; also named a 'cloud.' (7.42.1; 211, 215)

(iv) Godheads

Manifestations of the divine life in man. (215)

(v) a. Waters

Set free to flow by the heavenly lightning of Indra, master of Swar; in part they constitute the form of the pilgrim sacrifice (215); they also represent the outpouring of the Truth. (7.42.1-2; 214, 215, 216, 232)

b. Rivers

The seven mighty ones of heaven that place aright the thought. The seven waters are the waters of being; mothers from whom all forms of existence are born; figured as the seven mothers or seven fostering Cows, sapta dhenavaḥ¹. (1.72; 128, 141, 250)

(vi) Immortality

That which the mortal consciousness may grow or expand into in its advance toward Truth and Bliss; the result of the right movement on the great path. It is won by the sacrifice. (6.49.11; 4.1.16; 1.72; 1.83.5; 194, 234, 250, 275-6)

1. dhenavaḥ does not occur in 1.72 though Aurobindo offers it probably as understood.

(vii) Hill (also called Rock or Mountain)

The hill of being, compact, environing the luminous cows; it is opened by the divine Word. It is eternal and filled with wealth -- a wealth gained by breaking the hill open. It has several levels. (6.64.11; 4.1.14; 15, 16; 4.2.15; 6.39.2; 208, 233, 234, 237, 264)

(viii) Panis

Sons of Darkness who withhold the supreme treasure in the secret cave at the base of the hill (mountain). They are without knowledge, and Indra (with the Angirases) replaces the darkness of the Panis with Light -- manifesting in its stead the wideness of the Truth. This is accomplished by the Word and by the Sun -- not with physical weapons. (2.24.6, 7; 6.39.4; 207, 264)

(ix) Pilgrim Sacrifice (path, way, movement, growth)

The forward movement on the path between the home of the gods and our earthly mortality up which the sacrifice and man by the sacrifice ascends to the home of the gods. Agni is said to move forward by the knowledge and the human fathers rend open the compact hill by the mind that seeks the light. Labouring and travelling to the Seat (of Aditi), they attained in that supreme seat to the shining glory of Agni (passage through three mental heavens). This is the path, the journey by which we become the Angirases, the song of Heaven, the divine-human beings, creating in ourselves the seven seers, creating, begetting, or forming the divine births in our own being. All this is in the interest of achieving the great birth, light and divine movement of the Truth-knowledge -- with the finding

of the goal, the gods and seers (Angirasas) enter the supreme planes above. The birth is from the dryness called the desert, i.e., the material being (unwatered by the streams of the Truth), which as a form of material existence must be reduced to its divine equivalent. (1.68.2; 229, 473)

The pilgrim sacrifice is also an ascent and as such it refers to the ascent of the divine powers in man and by this action of the gods mortal man awakens to the knowledge and finds Agni standing in the supreme seat and goal. The artificial obstructions and established things which deter progress are overcome by Indra who, in becoming the Angirasas, is companioned by the Maruts. Thus are overcome the sons of Darkness in whom these obstructions entrench themselves, for the Maruts are battling forces and Life-Powers and they support the action of the thought. (1.71.3; 4.2.15; 1.72; 6.49.11; 4.1.12; 216, 224, 233, 234-5, 237, 238, 246, 250, 251)

(x) The Gated House

The dwelling-place of the soul, i.e., the body. Agni dwells in the gated homes of this being as the means of accomplishment of the mortal. It is prayed that all the gods be in all our homes, i.e., every part of our existence, to create the bliss and immortality. (7.42.4; 7.76.2; 4.1.9, 18, 19; 4.2.12; 215, 224, 232, 235, 237)

(xi) Agni's place of activity

Between earth and heaven, between the superconscient and the subconscient, his highest and lowest states respectively — one in utter light, the other in utter darkness. (R.V. 7.99.3-4; 172, 233)

Aurobindo's conception of Vedic sacrifice
with respect to the whole work: On the Veda.¹

The principal godhead who empowers us to effect the sacrifice
 2
 is Agni: described as the truth conscious seer-will. He also calls
 the other gods to the sacrifice. (231,108) The relation of the
 sacrifice to the Truth-consciousness is suggested by Agni's "own
 home" being named the Truth-consciousness. (119) The place of
 the sacrifice is spoken of as "the house of Agni." (71)

There is an intimate connection between the Vedic sacrifice
 and a certain state of mind and soul (103); for the sacrifice is,
 psychologically the coming to self-consciousness of individual and
 cosmic activity. Thus cosmos and individual become, as activity,
 enlightened and aware of the goal. Indeed, the whole process of
 the universe is by nature a voluntary or involuntary sacrifice.
 Growth is effected by giving, and self-fulfilment by self-immolation
 (316), and so the performance of the sacrifice (sacrificial worship)
 is the chief duty of man with a view to the enjoyment of wealth here
 and heaven hereafter. (159) Man gives what he possesses in his
 being to the higher or divine nature and the fruit of this gift is
 the further enrichment of his manhood by the lavish bounty of the
 gods -- a wealth of spiritual riches, prosperity, felicity -- making

1. The numbers refer to pages in the text, On the Veda.

2. There is no sacrificer older than Agni who conducted the first sacrifice. He knows the sacrifice exactly and all its rites. Priesthood is his most salient feature. See A. A. Macdonell's Vedic Mythology, Grundriss der Indo-Arischen Philologie und Altertumskunde, III, Band I, Heft A (Strassburg: Karl J. Trübner, 1897), p. 97. Hereafter this work will be referred to as Macdonell. Macdonell's work is profusely annotated and contains the appropriate references for epithets of the gods which he quotes.

for power to journey and a force of battle. As a journey the sacrifice is a progression led by Agni up the divine path to the gods. The ascent of the Angirasa fathers to the divine world of Swar is its type. But the journey of the sacrifice is a battle also of which the conflict of Indra and the Angirasa is the principal episode. (278-9) In a word, the life of man is a sacrifice to the gods; ¹ a journey crossing dangerous waters; an ascent from level to level of the hill of being; and a battle against hostile nations. (208)

The principal features of the sacrifice are: 1) the kindling of the divine flame; 2) the offering of the ghṛta and Soma "wine"; 3) the chanting of the sacred word brahma. The gods are said to be born, created, manifested and increased in man by the offering and chanting. They increase, and at the same time the gods increase man also, i.e., his physical and mental existence to utmost capacity, and beyond these they create the higher worlds. (279)

The object of the sacrifice is to win the divine being and to possess the human existence with it, thus making the lower existence subject to the truth and law of the higher being. The

1. Aurobindo's expression 'sacrificial worship' has for him a universal relevance and 'worship' is both conscious and unconscious. The brute sacrifice, i.e., the natural death of brute life in the interest of biological process, he views as part of the universal sacrifice. Of course, he interprets and follows the Gītā doctrine of sacrifice as being the ground and creative principle by which the worlds come into being. Note especially Gītā 3.15.

fourth or divine world is won by the complete thought of the Truth which gains also for man the complete spiritual wealth which is itself the object, the goal of the sacrifice. (279,280) Such a goal is the integral relating of Thought, Action and Enjoyment. The Cow, Horse and Soma-wine are the figures of this triple sacrifice (illuminations, powers, spiritual ecstasies). (91) In all their details these symbols of the sacrifice and the wealth acquired thereby symbolize man's effort and means toward the greater end, namely, the acquisition of immortality. (159)

Of supreme importance for Aurobindo's conception of the meaning of the Veda is the question of the nature of Swar — the wide ether world. He translates 1.36.8: "Human beings slaying the Coverer have crossed beyond both earth and heaven and made the wide world for their dwelling place...." A certain darkness conceals it from our vision, but it must be made visible. Its discovery depends upon the birth of the Dawn, the rising of the Sun, the upsurging of the Solar herds (radiances or illuminations of a divine Dawn, 159) out of their secret cave. The condition of seeing or attaining to Swar is the birth of the Dawn and Sun. Note translation of 6.72.1: "Ye found the Sun, ye found Swar, ye slew all darkness and limitations." Again in 6.47.8: "Thou in thy knowledge leadest us on to the wide world, even Swar, the Light which is freedom from fear, with happy being." The substance of Swar is the great light, is Sūrya's, the light of the Sun, and in this world the cows, the rays of Sūrya disport themselves freely. Aurobindo concludes Swar to be: 1) a supra-celestial

wideness; 2) a supra-mental heaven — beyond the two Rodasi, heaven and earth; 3) a heaven of supra-mental Truth and immortal Beatitude; 4) a heaven whose substance is the light of Truth. (166-174) Our sacrifice, then, is the offering of all our gains and works to the powers of the higher existence. (431)

The sacrifice is also an arrangement of human activities for they belong by right to different cosmic Powers. These Powers can operate on our own behalf only as we will the right arrangement of our activities and enjoyments to accord with the functions of the gods. Such willing is an all-important preparation for achieving the higher existence. The Word yields right realization. It expresses the Thought which is sent from out the Vast to the seer. In order to be effectual the Word must be accepted by other divine Powers. (317-18) Thus it touches some potentiality in nature, effects some light of realization inducing the divine Workers to manifest in man's superficial consciousness revealing openly their respective functions. The Word must also illuminate the double nature of Agni who is both a Light as well as a Force. (431) For the sacrifice as an action consists in forming or extending the universal being, sarvatāti, and the divine being devatāti. (599)

A theory of inner sacrifice depends upon viewing the Veda as showing both an inner and external sense. Externally, the powers of physical Nature are personified. The inner sense, however, reveals the universal powers of Nature in her subjective activities; the basic supposition being that man, by combining

inner sacrifice and right mental action, can convert these powers into their proper or divine nature. The mortal becomes immortal.

(77) This inner sacrifice is chiefly effected by the Will guided¹ by a purified discernment. (88) First the Deva, the All-Seer, secretly builds up the eternal worlds; then he becomes manifest, is born, in building up in man the Truth and the Immortality. (136)

A theory of mutual sacrifice depends upon the vision of man and gods participating in a joint effort. The gods are born, i.e., come into manifestation in the sacrifice, and in return for the Word, the "wine" and the ghṛta, they confer in abundance the spiritual wealth. Here the sacrifice is a task — and mutual creation. (158) The response of the continual self-offering of the human to the divine is the continual descent of the divine² into the human. (77) Agni, as the Immortal in mortals, takes the place of the ordinary will and knowledge of man raising him into the immortality of the Truth and Beatitude. (136) Whereas the Dasya withholds his wealth from the Aryan, the gods, on the contrary, lavish wealth on the Aryan as he gives his wealth to the gods. (269)

The aspiration of the Vedic seer is the enrichment and expansion of man's being until his soul, rising, moves through the divine doors to a supreme felicity of divine existence beyond

1. Cf. Agni as Seer-Will.

2. Cf. Christianity, particularly the varieties of its mystical tradition.

heaven and earth. Such an ascent is the parable of the Angirasa Rishis. (159)

Critical approach to variations in translation

In order to demonstrate critically the textual variations in translation between Geldner and Aurobindo, the following examples have been selected. In the interest of showing that Vedic symbols are far from rigidly defined, a third translation has been offered, namely, Ralph T. H. Griffith's. Geldner and Aurobindo are represented by G. and A. respectively. The following images are among the many used by Aurobindo, his interpretation of which lays, in part, the foundation for his translation and commentary.

Swar (wide other world)

7.99.4

G: ...weiten Raume geschaffen....(supra, p. 52).

A: ...created the wide other world....(supra, p. 52).

Griffith: ...spacious room....(II, 94).

2.21.4

G: ...die Sonne....(supra, p. 53).

A: ...Swar....(supra, p. 53).

Griffith: ...the light of Dawn....(I, 286).

4.1.11

G: ...im Grunde des grossen, im Schlosse dieses Dunkel-
raumes....(supra, p. 61).

A: ...in the foundation of the vast world (Swar) in its
womb....(supra, p. 64).

Griffith: ...at great heaven's base, and in this region's bosom....(I, 392).

Rays of Sūrya

7.99.3

G: ...mit Pflocken gefestigt (supra, p. 52).

A: ...by the rays of Surya....(supra, p. 52).

Griffith: ...fixed...with pegs....(II, 94).

Three mental heavens

1.72.3

G: ...drei Herbste lang....(supra, p. 70).

A: ...three years (...corresponding perhaps to the passage through the three mental heavens)....(supra, p. 72).

Griffith: ...three autumn seasons....(I, 96).

Cows of Light (luminous cows)

4.1.19

G: ...Kuhe....(supra, p. 62).

A: ...Cows of Light....(supra, p. 67).

Griffith: ...milk-cows....(I, 393).

4.1.15 (see also v. 16)

G: Das Herz voll Verlangen nach Kühen...den festen, zugesparten Fels, der die Rinder festhielt und umschloss, den befestigten Rinderpferch mit göttlichem Wort erschlossen (supra, p. 62).

A: They with the mind that seeks the light (the cows...) rent the firm and compact hill that environed the luminous cows... opened by the divine word of vacasā daivyena...the firm pen full of the kine. (supra, p. 65).

Griffith: Eager with thought...the men with their celestial speech threw open the solid mountain, firm, compact, enclosing, confining Cows, the stable full of cattle....(I, 393).

7.42.1

Waters

G: Die im Wasser schwimmenden Kühe erheben ihr Gebrüll....
(supra, p. 56).

A: ...The fostering cows that diffuse their waters....
(supra, p. 56).

Griffith: ...the Milch-kine swimming in the waters....(II, 46).

Seats

4.1.16

G: ...(Namen)....(supra, p. 62).

A: ...(seats)....(supra, p. 66).

Griffith: ...name....(I, 392).

Cry of heaven

7.42.1

G: ...das Gewieher des davonstürmenden (Renners)....
(supra, p. 56).

A: ...the cry of heaven....(supra, p. 56).

Griffith: ...roar of cloudy heaven....(II, 46).

Truth, mind and thought

1.71.3

G:)
A:) note all of supra, 59 (a and b).

Griffith: ...They stablished order, made his service fruitful; then parting them among the longing faithful, not thirsting after aught, they come, most active, while with sweet food the race of Gods they strengthen. (I, 94).

4.1.10

G:) note all of supra, p. 61f.; also the importance Aurobindo
) accords the thought.
 A:)

G: ...Sinne...supra, p. 61.

Griffith: ...wisdom....(I, 392).

4.1.12

G: Zuerst kam unter lauten Beifall die Schar hervor im Schosse des Gesetzes, im Neste des Stiers....(supra, p. 61).

A: He went forward by illumined knowledge as the first force,
 1
 in the seat of the Truth, in the lair of the Bull(supra, p. 64).

Griffith: Wondrously, first he rose aloft, defiant, in the Bull's lair, the home of holy Order....(I, 392).

(mind) 4.1.15 (see supra, p. 62ff.).
4.1.17

G: ...die Sonne beschritt die hohen Gefilde....(supra, 62).

A: ...the Sun entered the vast fields (of the Truth)....
 (supra, p. 66).

Griffith: Sūrya ascended to the wide expanses....(I, 393).

3.31.5

G:)
) note all of supra, 69-70 ; especially p. 70.
 A:)

G: ...mit vorwärtstrebenden Sinne....

1. Cf. 4.1.16.

A: ...the cows, the thinkers clove out....(Cf. rending of hill asunder).

Griffith: ...drive them forward with their spirit.

Sacrifice as work

7.76.1

G: Das Auge der Götter ist nach deren Ratschluss erstanden(supra, p.58 n. Auge, Dem geistigen Augen des Dichters.) (III, 247).

A: ...by the work (of the sacrifice) the eye of the gods has been born (or, by the will power of the gods vision has been born)....(supra, p. 58).

Griffith: Through the God's power that eye was first created....(II, 74).

The forward journey

See 3.31.5 (supra, p. 69).

Guide

4.2.13

G: ...ein guter Führer bist....(supra, p.67).

A: ...the perfect guide (on that journey)....(supra, p. 68).

Griffith: ...Good guidance hast thou....(I, 395).

Desert

6.49.11

G: ...Unansehnliche....(supra, p. 54).

A: ...not illumined....(supra, p. 54).

Griffith: ...desert....(I, 617).

1.68.2

G: ...als du Gott lebend aus dem trocknen (Holze) geboren wurdest....(supra, p. 60).

A: ...when, O godhead, thou art born a living soul from the dryness (i.e., from the material being, the desert, as it is called, unwatered by the streams of the Truth)....(supra, p. 60).

Griffith: All men are joyful in thy power, O God, that living from the dry wood thou art born....(I, 92).

Heroes (battle implied)

5.4.11

G: ...Mannen....(supra, p. 53).

A: Heroes....(supra, p. 53).

Griffith: ...heroes....(I, 470).

Reck, hill, rending of hill asunder

6.49.11

G: ...kommet...zum Bittgesuch des Sängers....(supra, p. 54).

A: ...come uttering the word to the high place (or desirable plane of earth or hill, adhi sām praneḥ (6.6.4), which is probably the sense of varasyām. (supra, p. 54).

Griffith: ...come...to the longing of the singer....(I, 617).

4.1.13

G: ...Kühe in der Höhle....(supra, p. 61).

A: ...cows...in the rock....(supra, p. 64).

Griffith: ...milk-kine hid in the mountain stable, in the cavern....(I, 392).

4.1.14 (cf. 4.1.15, supra, p. 62).

G: ...den Fels aufgesprengt hatten....(supra, p. 62).

A: They rent the hill asunder....(supra, p. 64).

Griffith: ...they had rent the mountain....(I, 392).

Goal

2.24.6

G: Sie, die bei ihrer Ankunft den im Versteck verborgenen fernsten Schatz der Panis antrafen....(supra, p. 55).

A: They who travel towards the goal and attain that treasure of the Panis, the supreme treasure hidden in the secret cave....(supra, p. 55).

Griffith: They who with much endeavour searching round obtained the Panis' noblest treasure hidden in the cave....(I, 290).

Homes of this being

4.1.9

G: Er wohnt (die Opfer) ausrichtend, in dessen Behausung. Der Gott hat Gütergemeinschaft mit den Sterlichen erlangt. (supra, p. 61).

A: ...he dwells in the gated homes of this being, accomplishing; he, a god, has come to be the means of accomplishment of the mortal....(supra, p. 63).

Griffith: He stays effectual in this mortal's dwelling; and the God wins a share in his possessions. (I. 392).

4.1.18

G: ...'Alle götter sind in allen Häusern'....(supra, p. 62).

A: Let all the gods be in all our homes....(supra, p. 66).

Griffith: Now all the gods abide in all their dwellings.... (I, 393).

4.2.12

G: ...in die Wohnung des Āyu verpflanzen....(supra, p. 67).

A: ...in the homes of the human being (embodies human being
....(supra, p. 68).

Griffith: ...in dwellings of the living....(I, 395).

Divine-human generation of the gods1.72.5

G: Nachdem sie die (bisherigen) Leiber aufgegeben hatten,
namen sie die ihrigen an....(supra, p. 71, Note 5c: Dieser Zug stimmt
zu 3d. Die Angiras' nehmen einen neuen unsterblichen Leiban....(I,
95).

A: ...they created their own (their proper or divine forms
....(supra, p. 72).

Griffith: ...they made their own bodies....(I, 96).

Divine sonship4.2.15

G: Wir möchten des Himmels Sohne, die Angiras' werden und
inbrünstig den Fels mit dem Schatz erbrechen....(supra, p. 68).

A: ...may we beget for ourselves the gods; may we become
the Angirasas, sons of Heaven, breaking open the wealth-filled hill,
shining in purity. (supra, p. 68).

Griffith: May we...engender...men to be ordainers. May we,
Angirasas, be sons of Heaven, and, radiant, burst the wealth-con-
taining mountain. (I, 395).

1. Cf. 1.72.5, supra, pp. 71, 72.

In sum, it is clear that Aurobindo has chosen to translate the pastoral images of Vedic culture into an elaborate symbolic structure whose primary reference is psychological. This psychological tool he uses in the interest of the life of the spirit. (Whether he is justified in so translating is not the problem for this study.) It has been thought profitable to make a detailed example of his variance with other translators because Gregory's work does not raise a like issue. Gregory did not attempt to translate the Old Testament into Greek in the way in which Aurobindo has attempted to translate the Rg Veda into English. Aurobindo's reading of the original text raises the question, then, of the relation of his approach to the result he achieves. He states his hypothesis unequivocally: "The hypothesis on which I shall conduct my own enquiry is that the Veda has a double aspect and that the two, though closely related, must be kept apart. The Rishis arranged the substance of their thoughts in a system of parallelism by which the same deities were at once internal and external Powers of universal Nature, and they managed its expression through a system of double values by which the same language served for their worship in both aspects. But the psychological sense predominates and is more pervading, close-knit and coherent than the physical. The Veda is primarily intended to serve for spiritual enlightenment and self-culture. It is, therefore, this sense which has first to be restored." (38)

Hence, one cannot take for granted that Aurobindo's com-

mentary is merely the effect of his meditation on a text sufficiently standardized to assure that any reader of a translation of the Sanskrit will be reading the same images (let alone the same wording of the original). Consequently the result he achieves is conditioned two-fold: 1) Wherein the images are read identically and the syntax leads to no very satisfactory result -- which occurs often in Sāyana's renderings of meaning as well as in European and American scholarship -- one may have recourse to further linguistic research, suspending interpretation in the meantime; or, one may permit the images to evoke, in their own right, responses which yield, at least, some personal satisfaction; 2) One may superimpose an hypothesis as to the total function and structure of the literature and allow this to guide the translation and interpretation. I believe Aurobindo has done both. He has combined linguistic method (whether academically respectable by Western standards is beside the point here) and poetic insight with the above hypothesis (supra, p. 94).

In regard to the effect upon the translation of the Rg Veda by the superimposition of the above hypothesis, a few examples should suffice:

<u>7.99.3</u>	G: Pflöcken ["]	A: rays
<u>supra</u> , p. 52.	G: beide weiten Räume	A: wide other world
	G: Für das Opfer ...geschaffen	A: created for this sacrifice (i.e., for its result)
<u>5.4.11</u>	G: Söhnen	A: Suns

supra, p. 53.

2.21.4

G: die Sonne

A: Swar

supra, p. 53.

2.24.6

G: Ankunft

A: goal

supra, p. 55.

7.42.1

G: das Gewisher
des davon-
stumenden
(Renners)

A: cry of heaven

supra, p. 56.

7.76.1

G: Savitr, der
Allermans-
Gott

A: Savitri, the god,
the universal male

supra, p. 58.

Note: Here the esoteric translation uses a symbol more 'concrete' than that of the exoteric; a particular cause of confusion among meaning perspectives. (Esoteric: Male::Exoteric: God.)

1.71.3

G: Gesetz

A: truth

supra, p. 59.

4.2.12

G: als sie ihn
verpflantzen

A: holding him
within

supra, pp. 67-68.

3.31.3

G: Agni...um die
Söhne des grossen
Rötlichen

A: Agni, the (Divine
Force)...to the
great sons of the
Shining One (the
Deva, Rudra).

supra, p. 69.

Note: Here the gods Agni and Rudra are understood in their psychological senses in relation to spiritual enlightenment.

1.72.2

G: Sich mühend, sine
Spur verfolgend,
sinnend machten sie
Halt bei der ent-
ferntesten Spur,
beider teuren(Spur)
des Agni

A: ...labouring travelling
to the Seat, holding
the Thought they at-
tained in the supreme
seat to the shining
(glory) of Agni.

supra, pp. 70, 72.

In the next section an attempt will be made to bring together many of the critical elements in On the Veda, and to observe the pattern of thought thus achieved. I have tried to remain faithful to Aurebindo's terminology where this has seemed feasible. Except in whole passages of several sentences in length, I have not isolated his terms and phraseology with quotation marks because part of the experience of understanding Aurobindo relates precisely to the importance of his English style in terms of his subject. However, in every case I have offered the page reference. The grandiloquence of his expression is sometimes objected to. But when this is seen against the background of his English education, beginning in late last century and it is borne in mind that rhetorical gesture was for him a legitimate and useful vehicle of his thought, the question becomes worthy of attention.

Much mystical writing shows a curious style. It is almost as though the "linear" direction of discursive expression were contorted into circularity, and one experiences the exasperation of reading what seems only profoundly repetitive. Yet, often this is mere appearance because mystical thought usually expresses itself linguistically in an 'absence' of syllogistical method. In such style, verbs and prepositions become of utmost importance; indeed prepositions are sometimes made to bear the whole burden of movement, as for instance in Christian discourse: "we in him¹ and he in us"; "by faith"; "through hope"; "in love." Anyone of

1. Two Christian classics that exemplify this style superbly are the Cloud of Unknowing and Lady Julian's Revelations of Divine Love.

these prepositional phrases may invite and support volumes of philosophical and/or theological disquisition from those interested and competent to analyze them. The traditional difficulty with analyses of mystical works lies in their being attempted by thinkers who are, more often than not, out of patience with the claims of the mystic.

Aurobindo has not only a style difficult for the modern reader unaccustomed to his world of thought, but he complicates the difficulty further by references which are exotic to all but the Western scholar. On the other hand, his use of English — practically speaking, his native tongue — achieves at times remarkable beauty. Especially is this true of many fine passages in what is probably his most aesthetically satisfying prose work, Essays on the Gita. Certainly he mastered the essay form, and this in itself is not much recommendation today when the essay has little, if any, vogue. It is pathetic to realize that a master of English, whose object in writing seems clearly to have included a manner calculated to sound great depths of devotion — to say nothing of evoking intellectual joy and impassioned action — should have formed his subject so exotically. But perhaps this can be partially explained in noting that his subject, i.e., "the life divine," has been perennially exotic.

General Conclusion: The Divine,
Divine-human, and human activities
in the Sacrifice

The two goals of spiritual enlightenment and self-culture

are never separated in Aurobindo's approach to the Veda. He sees their integral relationship as the ideal the Rishis attained and for which they strove. The legend of the Angirasas and the Vṛtra myth are thus interpreted. They become paradigmatic for the whole human enterprise as it relates to spiritual enlightenment and self-culture. Insofar as Indian civilization did not continue to develop the balance between spiritual and cultural life, Aurobindo sees an historic fall. While never entirely recognized in theory, a sharp practical division came between Veda and Vedānta¹ — "the Veda for the priests, the Vedānta for the sages." Thus the Veda passed from sage to priest to scholar² (17, 18); yet in the early days the priest was also teacher and visionary (15). One is led to think, then, that in terms of achievement and promise, Aurobindo looks back upon Vedic times as a Golden Age of experiences difficult of access to ordinary mankind whose faculties are rudimentary and too imperfectly developed (14). Just why this degeneration set in during early India is not clear from his commentary. It is taken for granted, however. He thinks of humanity in terms not only of individual progress, but subject also to periods of collective progress. The Vedic age was one period of the latter and anterior to our intellectual philosophies — knowledge being a travelling and reaching toward the finding and winning of the light (12, 13). This notion

1. Vedānta is based on the 'end of the Vedas,' i.e., the Upaniṣads.

2. It is interesting to compare this rupture with its Western correlative — the division between religion and philosophy as recognized by Averroes, Spinoza, Hegel and Scheler.

is of especial interest to the philosopher of religion as well as to the historian, for there is no doubt that Scripture is not written perenially, and we live in an age of closed canons.

Aurebindo attempts to restore what he considers to have been the ancient Vedic sensitivity to divine impulse. This he does in the interest of the transfiguration of the natural world — a transfiguration which is the object of a "universal becoming of which
¹
ours is a little movement."

There are three aspects to the sacrificial movement of transfiguration: 1) the Divine; 2) the Divine-human; 3) the human.

The first involves the initiative of the gods. In relation to our life imaged in part as a journey, some of the more significant actions of the gods are as follows:

²
Indra aids on the great journey (3.31.7; 193); Agni is the Steed of the journey — the White Horse (515); the milk of the herds, the knowledge, is poured out into us by the Impeller of the cosmic
³
movement and journey (578); Pūshan is constantly associated with

1. Essays on the Gita, p. 430.

2. Indra's twin brother is Agni, and another brother is Pūsan. Indra is the king of moving things and of men. Macdonell, pp. 57, 58.

3. The picture of Pūsan is "...one of a pastoral solar deity who performs as the divine shepherd of men and their flocks and herds and as such knows the ways to lead them safely to and from pasture and from pasture to pasture so that none of their wealth is lost or stolen....Pūsan naturally developed the secondary character of a god of general augmentation and growth, viewed as a dispenser of riches and well-being, a benevolent distributor of good fortune from whom the worshippers sought all manner of wealth." Samuel D. Atkins, Pūsan in the Rig-Veda (Princeton, N. J., 1941), pp. 16, 19.

the image of the journey, chariot, path, because the growth or increase which he gives is a journey toward Truth's fullness (542):

"Pushan has been born on thy forward travelling on the paths through earth and through heaven" (10.17.6; 543); and where the gods have made a path for him, the sun goes (531);¹ three movements or worlds of our pregressive consciousness, i.e., satisfactions of body, vitality and mind, are carried in the Ashwins' car (375); when Indra goes to slay Vṛtra, he prays to Vishnu (1.22.19; 4.18.11); for the highest seat of Vishnu is the goal of the journey (395).

The Divine-human action is indicated in the legend of the Angirases who are pilgrims of the Light (3.53.7; 209); and the action of the gods in us is a mutual action (see supra, p.85), a growing into the godhead through the action in us of Mitra, Varuna and the Vasus (7.52.1; 216).

The action of man, the human action as such is mentioned in terms of men "creating" the wide being or world when they slay Vṛtra and pass beyond heaven and earth (225); the treasure of the Panis is acquired by men who travel towards the goal (2.24.6; 207); our growing wealth of light, power and knowledge is itself a means to divine happiness and immortal bliss, for the paths are made manifest by the removal of darkness (196); the journey from mortality to immortality was accomplished by the Ancestors and opened by them for their de-

1. Note among Pūsan's exclusive epithets: goats instead of horses draw his car; 'glowing,' 'deliverer,' 'son of deliverance,' 'losing no cattle,' 'losing no goods,' 'bringing prosperity,'... Macdonell, pp. 35 f.

scendants (241); "They who entered into all things that bear right fruit formed a path towards the immortality (1.72.9; 227); the Aryan, god or man, arrives at the highest knowledge-vision (259).

The following represents a summary of the divine initiative in the battle between the Gods and Titans for the triple world of heaven, mid-air and earth, for possession of the human being's life, mind and body, his mortality or immortality (525).

Man aspired to three great conquests, 1) the herds; 2) the waters; 3) the Sun or the solar world. The Gods are in constant battle with the Vrtras and the Panis to give these to man (125); Indra Valahan is the Vedic slayer of Vala, the withholder of light (106); Agni, with his blows, breaks down the walls that limit (7.6.5; 275); the Maruts are battling forces who overthrow the established things (194); the Divine mind¹ slays the false force that distorts knowledge and action (247), "...slay the foe, cleave out the Cows, O Indra" (6.17.3; 178).

In the Divine-human struggle the gods are associated with the Angirasas. The strong places of the hill are violently broken open by Indra, strong with the Soma "wine," and the Angirasas (161); the slaying of Vrtra² releases the waters preliminary to the birth of the Sun, the Dawn and Heaven, as also the defeat of Vala releases

1. Cf. the concept of Good Mind (vohumanal) in the Avesta.

2. Macdonnell describes the great Vrtra myth as the "basis" of Indra's nature; "the conquest of the demons of drought or darkness and the consequent liberation of the waters or the winning of light forming his mythological essence." Macdonnell, pp. 55, 58.

the herds; also, the opening of the hill yields the flowing waters; note in relation to these images (7.90.4; 1.72.8; 1.100.18; 5.14.4; 6.60.2; 1.32.12; 3.43.7; 2.15.8; 168); the Divine-human quest becomes an expedition and battle vs. the powers of darkness (209) and Agni's mares bear the Hero, the battling power within us (215); the sacrifice in terms of battle is opposed by Vṛtras, Panis and other evil powers and in the conflict the clash of Indra and the Angirases is the principal episode (279); the field of action of the Panis is earth (physical), mid-world (vital), and heaven (mental) (266-7); the battle is said to proceed through these three realms, yet the battle as such takes place not on earth but on the other shore of the Antarikṣa (mid-world) — see all of hymn 1.33; the Dasyus are cast out of both heaven and earth and find no respite from the lightnings of Indra and the rays of the Sun (269-271); the Gods battle with the Demons in the dynamic worlds of Life and Desire — the whole vitalistic existence of emotions, passions and affections forms the mid-world for man, the pivot of the mid-world being desire; just as man's heaven is pure thought and feeling, and earth his body and material living (428).

The human element of the struggle is no less explicit:

A cosmic struggle is represented in the vicissitudes of the human soul, for the soul is a battlefield for the cosmic Powers, just as is the world stage. Man's soul is 1) a world full of beings; 2) a kingdom where armies engage to help or hinder a supreme conquest; 3) a house in which the gods are our guests. Here the demons strive to possess its energies and being, yet it is here that a seat

of sacrifice is spread for the celestial session (438-9); and even when the light has been discovered one requires still to fight for it (242). The Rishis are warriors as well as sages and as powers of Agni; they are the heroes of the Vedic war (3.53.7; 4.75.9; 190). Aurobindo's translation of a prayer to Pūshan (the Sun in his role as Increaser) summarizes the issue:

"O Pūshan, the wolf, the troubler of our bliss who teaches us evil, him smite from the Path. The adversary, the robber perverse of heart, drive him far from the road of our journeying. Set thy foot on the distressful force of whatever power of duality expresses evil in us" (1.42.2, 3, 4; 542-43).

The divine initiative in the ascent is, in part, Indra's. When his largeness exceeds heaven and earth and the mid-world he creates the opposite world to darkness, namely, the world of truth and knowledge. The secret cave at the base of the hill or mountain is only the home of the Panis, the demonic powers, and not their field of action. Therefore Indra's "largeness" depends upon his ascent of the mountain above both the home and the heaven - earth - mid-world field of action of the Panis (266-7), that is, he must
1
overcome the powers of non-existence in order to build up the true

1. Non-existence, asat, Aurobindo construes as the "non-existence of the truth of things," "the first aspect of them that emerges from the inconscient ocean," which is his translation of apraketam salilam (10.129.3). From this "inconscient ocean" the first aspect of things emerges, namely, their non-existent truth, asat (267, 112, 122, 354). Cf. Jacob Boehme's Six Theosophic Points, trans. J. R. Earle (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1958).

existence. Agni, also, as seer priest and worker has the mission to raise the soul from obscurity to light, from the struggle in Nature to the Beatitude, the divine existence (441; 111). The goal of the ascent is also referred to as the highest seat of Vishnu, Delight, the last of Vishnu's three strides¹ (395, 399). The God in man conquers his own true Seat itthā padam asya (411). The wealth of the Panis is recovered and ascends heavenward (275).

The Divine-human ascent is symbolized in the march of Agni and the Navagwas which ascends the hill after ranging over the earth (187); for the divine powers in man rise out of their ordinary appearances to the Shining Truth beyond (1.72; 251). This Truth is the passage and the ante-chamber of the goal -- the Bliss of the divine existence (111).

The goal for the human being is the Ānanda, the divine Beatitude -- that which is all honey (4.58.10; 122), and the Aryan god or man who houses in him a brilliant force of battle (259) also arrives at highest knowledge-vision (259); the march is at once a progress forward and an ascent (300); the end is always elevation to a higher end, but, most important, the exaltation must be integral-mind, vital powers and body; nothing can be rejected in a proper ascension to the divine consciousness (310). The ascension is possible "be-

1. Macdonell interprets the three steps as "the course of the solar deity through the three divisions of the universe"; and notes that the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa places Vishnu locally as highest of the gods contrasted with Agni the lowest. Having three stations is predominantly associated with Agni. Macdonell, pp. 38, 41, 93.

cause every being really holds in himself all that his outward vision perceives as if external to him. We have subjective faculties hidden in us which correspond to all the tiers and strata of the objective cosmic system and these form for us so many planes of our possible existence. It is open to him to become awake to profounder depths and higher heights within and such awakening is his intended progress....Each ascent is thus a new birth of the soul, and the Veda calls the worlds "births" as well as seats and dwelling places" (427). The Climb is from plateau to plateau as of a mountain (432). As a bird, the Hansa, the soul of man soars beyond the physical and mental consciousness, ascending the path of the Truth (428). Man makes a double movement, in that he holds Diti (the mother of darkness) and Aditi¹ the infinite Cow of Light, the supramental consciousness) together (529). This is understandable in that it is from the darkness that the riches are recovered; man is lord of the double movement, he realizes the universal in the individual becoming the Infinite in the Finite (529).

The image of the rock, mountain or hill is of cardinal importance for this study. It is the infinite rock in which is hidden the treasure of heaven (178); it contains the pen of good milkers (179); and the well of honey (203); it is also referred to as the

1. It is interesting to note Macdonell's remark: "Mystical speculation on the name (Aditi) would lead to her being styled a cow, as representing boundless plenty, or to being identified with the boundless earth, heaven, or universe." Diti, he thinks to be "merely an anthesis to that of Aditi...." Macdonell, pp. 122, 123.

rock of this material existence (180) and the rock in the hill from which the streams of Truth must be cloven out (488 n).

As the hill, it is the hill of being (140) whose opening is preliminary to the birth of the Sun and the release of the cows (168, 175); the cave of the hill holds the sun in the darkness (179); and Brhaspati breaks open this cave of the Panis (191) releasing the hill's pregnant contents (193); it is also broken in the power of Soma, "the divine delight supporting life's activities" (208). The hill has three levels (221); as the hill of heaven it is severed by words, and as already formed of our triple existence its summit is rent asunder by Indra (241-3); although firmly formed and impervious in appearance it holds the voice of concealed illuminations and can admit seekers when broken (247); this hill of being, ascended by the Aryan (the toiler, fighter and climber) ¹ has its unbroken level of Vala broken open by Indra (249) who also tears the waters from it (4.16.8; 249); Vala holds the herds of light back in his cave, i.e., he holds light from manifesting consciously (367); but the rending of the cave releases the herds of the divine dawn (rays of Truth's sun) and they ascend the hill of being (281).

As to the mountain, Indra is said to reach the goal upon it (4.22.2; 211); Vishnu also stands at the goal, on the peak of the mountain (398) and it is on the summit of the many plateaued mountain of our being that the gods enjoy their yearlong day (536) -- a possession of our own when we reach the supramental consciousness.

1. Vrtra, 1.32.

The fundamental antinomy in the Rg Veda, according to Aurobindo, is that between Night and Light. Aurobindo conceives this not as an ontological dualism, but simply as a precondition for becoming, for growth into consciousness from a state of "in-conscience." Night is the obscured consciousness of the mortal being. Nevertheless, the subconscious holds the Truth; it is hidden in the cave of the hill. The lost sun is the sun of Truth which lies in the darkness of the subconscious condition and it awaits recovery (230-1). The Vedic night is the nonexistence of the Truth of things (267), and Agni as Priest of the sacrifice is the slayer of the powers of Darkness -- the Titans who dwell in the cave of darkness (492, 525). The One is born by the greatness of his energy out of the darkness; Dawn and Night are sisters -- obverse and reverse sides of the eternal Infinite (534). Therefore it is said that they are different forms of the one mind and suckle the same luminous Child (536).

It is most important to note that the loss of the herds and the return of the night of ignorance is not so much a tragic occurrence as a rhythmical pattern in the process of enlightenment. The accomplishment of the divine work is on condition of a succession of luminous dawns; and Pushan the Increaser is said to bear a luminous goad (540). There is a periodic revisiting of illumination for the divine work cannot be suddenly accomplished nor the godhead created all at once (540).

Truth is imaged as the Light; it comes to us as light and as a voice which compels a change of thought (115). It is even

said that the lost Sun is made to rise by the thought (191). Light in the Vedic view, says Aurobindo, was the physical form of thought (298); it is the liberating agency of which Force is the condition (351); and so Truth and Light come to be equivalent words as are their opposites, Darkness and ignorance.

It would be a mistake, however, to conclude that virtue has little or no place in this process of illumination. Sūrya himself is made by the godward will of man; he is perfectly fashioned by the doers of the divine works (532, 33).

Further, the divine knowledge in the heavens of mind comes to be as a result of the sacrificial Flame's passionate effort -- a struggle in which man is directly involved inasmuch as man is the thinker, the god is the seer (484, 507). But man is not to remain a mere thinker for in that he ascends to the home of the Gods, to absolute Truth, he becomes the victorious seer (428). This is his struggle toward immortality, referred to as an ascent (234). In Aurobindo's opinion, the Veda is the earliest gospel of man's immortality (429), of which Aryaman, Varuna and Mitra are the lords (551). And so he concludes that the key to Vedic thought and practice is the contrast between our present mortal condition and the immortality to which we can aspire (429). Mortality is limitation. Limit and division are the marks of ignorance. Man becomes capable of immortality by increasing constantly his substance of being, will and knowledge which culminates in an intenser beatitude of joy (429-30). Thus he acquires new births -- material to vital, to mental, to physical, and eventually to wide, multiple,

cosmic man. These are the five Aryan types of human nature, yet over and above all these is the Absolute Aryan who abides in the transcendental harmony of all these states — having conquered and passed beyond them all (430). Agni, the divine force, the waters of existence that contain him, the Sun of divine knowledge and the wine of delight on the many-plateaued mountain of our being — these are all means by which we attain to immortality (607).

When immortality is viewed not only as the ascent of the human into the divine, but in its aspect of the descent of the divine into the human, the doctrine of divinization is made explicit. Man's deification and the transfiguration of mortal existence into an existence flooded with and controlled by divine existence becomes the object (4.3.9, 10; 239). The lower life is to be possessed by and subjected to the higher (273), and this evolution is effected gradually in Time through an unbroken succession of Dawns of the human spirit. Night, as Dawn's sister, is herself a mother of light preparing what Dawn reveals (311). The Divine-human existence is the goal as is shown by the human being becoming the seven seers, the Angirases (4.1.15; 237-8). Thus the soul is to enjoy a divinized mental and bodily existence (1.62.7; 206). The lower being is involved in a progressive surrender to the divine activities (290). When Dawn brings Swar into existence in us she also extends herself over the physical consciousness (338). The Force required for this transformation is the divine Will (Agni) taking possession of all human energies (331). He moves about in the whole physical and mental consciousness to

perform his work of transfiguration (497). The ideal to be achieved is svārājya and sāmrajya, rule over our inner being and mastery of our environment and circumstances — a perfect empire within and without (5.66.6; 593 and n.).¹

In conclusion it may be stated that the journey is a progressive movement, a growing into the godhead, a thrust toward and through limit. Even though the Dawns manifest the paths of the great journey, the path toward immortality is formed by those who enter into all things that bear right fruit. These cannot be entered except the Aryan follow the leading of the gods (550). He prays: "Since ye are they who rule over the world by the power of their mind of knowledge, thinkers of all that is stable and mobile, therefore, O gods, carry us beyond the sin of that which we have done and that which we have not done to the felicity (10.63.8; 550-51).

Entry into all things that bear right fruit is a condition of forming the path toward immortality; but that entry is not uncontested. Therefore it is said that the Hero who rides Agni's mares is the battling power within us that performs the journey (215). The nature of the journey depends directly upon how well the battle goes. The progress itself is a warring conflict of Gods and Titans. The union with things that bear right fruit is born from conflict,

1. "Svārājya and Sāmrajya, perfect empire within and without, rule of our inner being and mastery of our environment and circumstances, was the ideal of the Vedic sages, attainable only by ascending beyond our mortal mentality to the luminous Truth of our being, the supramental infinities on the spiritual plane of our existence" (593 n.).

i.e., from following the gods who lead us directly into battle; the power for which, within us, performs the journey.

The limit encountered in the battle is transcended in the ascent. Truth as the passage and the ante-chamber leads directly to the Bliss of the divine existence, yet the Bliss appears to be only a formal end in that the goal is elevation to an ever higher end (310). The illumination must be repeated constantly because man cannot hold or seize it whole all at once (381). Whereas Ananda is the goal, it is also the generator of the world of becoming by Soma, the dappled Bull; he is the parent of the variety of existences (409).

It would be a mistake to suppose that because there is a goal, therefore there is an end to activity: "It is neither today nor tomorrow; who knoweth that which is transcendent? When it is approached it vanishes from us" (1.170.1; 547-8). There is a third sea between infinite potential and infinite plenary, a sort of boundless wave, an ever developing conscious being. We must navigate this perilous ocean. "The wisdom of Varuna shapes in us the divine word which, inspired, intuitive, opens the doors to new knowledge. 'We desire him,' cries the Rishi 'as the finder of the Path because he unveils the thought by the heart; let new truth be born.' For this king is no whirler of a brute and stupid wheel; his are not the unfruitful cycles of a meaningless Law. There is a Path; there is constant progress; there is a goal" (665).

CHAPTER IV

COMPARISON OF GREGORY AND AUROBINDO
WITH REFERENCE TO THE TWO WORKS,
THE CONTEMPLATION...AND THE COMMENTARY
ON THE VEDA, RESPECTIVELY

This final chapter is also divided into three sections: the first is a textual comparison of key concepts and images offered in order to show what is textually fixed in the way of cardinal elements in both commentaries. The second section deals with similarities and differences in the treatment of sacrifice as journey-battle-ascent. Again, the Divine, Divine-human and human initiatives are brought forward and related to the concepts, power, light and beatitude. The third section compares essential differences in doctrine and concludes with a reflective statement on the significance of the study for further metaphysical inquiry.

Comparison of Key Concepts and Images

The Rock: Principal descriptions in both works

Gregory

In the place beside God there is the Rock (which is Christ [368 A]) and in the Rock a cross (400 A) into which Moses is commanded to run. The Space in the Rock is called the hollow — "an abode

Aurobindo

The treasure of heaven is hidden in the infinite rock; it is the pen of good milkers (178-9); it is the infinite rock of this material existence (180) and contains a well of honey (203); this rock is said to be in the hill (488),

Gregory

not made with hands" in expectation of the day when our dwelling (tent) will be destroyed (405 D). By analogy Space is an infinite and illimitable reality (405 B). It is also the course as well as the goal for the runner (408 C). Moses's entrance into the Rock signifies what is represented by these expressions: Paradise of joy (delights); eternal tabernacle; the abode with the Father; the water of peace; the heavenly Jerusalem (in the highest); the Kingdom of heaven; the reward of the elect; the crown of blessing (mercies); the crown of beauty; the mighty tower; the banquet feast; the throne with God, the throne of justice; the appointed place (408 A, B). When the Rock (Christ) is struck with the rod of faith, it becomes a thirst quenching drink pouring interiorly to those who open themselves to it (him) (368 A). This water symbolizes also penitence (repentance), because once tasted it is never forgotten and though spurned one may cause the Rock to gush forth again by repentance (413 B).

Aurobindo

i.e., the hill of being, whose opening is preliminary to the birth of the sun (168); the hill also holds the sun dwelling in darkness (179). This hill is ascended after ranging over the earth (187); it has three levels (221) and holds in hiding the subconscious Truth from which the sun is recovered (231). It is broken open by the Angirases (229) and the cave within the rock is broken open by Bṛhaspati (191). The waters are released from the hill by Indra (4.16.8, 249) and he also breaks open Vala's unbroken hill level (4.16.8, 249). It is also called the dense hill of matter (297).

GregoryAurobindoThe Mountain

"The mountain of the knowledge of God" (372 D) is ascended by the one who is: 1) led by the Word; 2) nourished by the manna; 3) vigorous in battle against his enemies, triumphing over them (372 D).

The mountain has three stations: 1) on nearing the heights the climber hears the sound of trumpets; 2) continuing he penetrates into the hidden and invisible sanctuary of the knowledge of God; 3) then passes into the tabernacle not made with hands — the true goal (376 A, 377 D).

It is called also the Mountain of desire (401 D).

The Darkness

The plague of the Darkening of the Air; we are interiorly lightened or darkened by the orientation of our will — no wall is imposed from without to obscure the sun; the darkness is in the eyes. Some attract the darkness by evil actions while others are bathed in the light of virtue (349 A, B).

God's incomprehensibility is also called a darkness — knowledge of the divine essence is inaccessible to all intellectual nature. Religious

The goal is the completion by Indra of his victorious journey, standing on the mountain. Indra carries the Angirassas with him and completes the journey when enriched by their light and force of thought. Vala is rent in pieces by the voice of the higher heaven (the thunder in the lightning flash of Indra) (210-211). Vishnu stands at the goal, on the summit, the peak of the mountain (398).

The gods enjoy the year-long day at the summit of the mountain; the many plateaued mountain of our being (536).

1

The Vedic Night is the nonexistence (a-sat) of the truth (sat; sat-ya) of things (267). Agni, Priest of the sacrifice is alayer of the powers of Darkness which dwells in the cave, the home of the Titans (492, 525). Night is the obscured consciousness of the mortal being where Truth is subconscious; the sun of the Truth must be recovered from the subconscious condition (230-1).

The night of ignorance returns successively, because the divine work can be accomplished only by

1. Darkness (tamas) cf. RV 10.129.3, as distinguished from the goddess of Night (Ratri). Macdonell observes that Ratri is conceived as the bright starlit night, not as the dark. See Macdonell,

Gregory

knowledge comes first as a light but eventually one comes to know that God transcends all knowledge and that "no one has seen God" (John 1.8; 376 D, 377 A). The wings covering the Ark of the Covenant signify, for Gregory, the same thing (384 C).

The Light

One falls, spiritually, not because of the privation of physical light; rather is it the privation on the part of the one who does not see (348 B, C).

The truth of the faith is a fountain gushing and transparent (345 A).

The Word is received by some as a light to their souls -- others ill-disposed to it remain in darkness (344 C, D). Those who by their works support the Church are lamps -- the Saviour called the Apostles "the light of the world."

Christ is the light of the world and the conduct of virtue leads to the knowledge of this light (332 C, D).

It is a difference of wills which distinguishes those in darkness from those in the light. (This is implied in 352 A).

Aurobindo

a succession of luminous dawns. Pusham goads this movement with his luminous goad (540).

The darkness is called also the inconscient Ocean (apraketam salilam (10.12.3) -- darkness concealed within darkness out of which the One is born by the greatness of His energy. Dawn and Night,¹ daughters of Heaven are obverse and reverse sides of the same eternal Infinite (536).

Dawn is brought to birth and the lost Sun is made to rise by the truth of the thought (191).

Light is the liberating agency as is Force the condition (351).

Truth comes to us as light, a voice, compelling a change of thought, imposing a new discernment of ourselves and all around us (115). The triumph of the Light is the triumph of the divine knowledge of the Truth vs. the darkness of this false or demonic knowledge (262).

Light, in the Vedic view, was the physical form of thought; and so Surya is the God of the revelatory and intuitive mind (298).

Sūrya is made by the godward will of man -- perfectly fashioned by the doers of divine works (532, 3).

Whereas Dawn and Sūrya bring the light, Indra is ruler of Swar, i.e., the luminous or divine Mind.

1. This seems to confuse Night, the goddess Rātri, with the philosophical concept (tamas, asat, etc.). The pun is possible in English but totally unjustified in Sanskrit. Cf. RV 10.129 with 10.127.2, where Rātri "conquers everything with her light"; jyotiṣā badhate tamah!

This difficulty is somewhat lessened when it is remembered that Aurobindo conceived of Night as a phase of illumination, since the divine work can be accomplished only by a succession of luminous dawns (540). He interprets 1.113.2,3 as distinguishing Night and Dawn and that Night can be made to yield the shining milk of heaven (536). Therefore, until we possess "the yearlong day enjoyed by the gods on the summit of the eternal mountain" (536) the return of night is a return of ignorance (540). Has this a relation to the Dark Night of the Soul of St. John of the Cross?

The SerpentGregory

The true serpent is sin (416 A).

The serpent raised in the desert is a symbol of the mystery of the cross (416 B).

...if the author of sin is called a serpent by Holy Scripture, what is born from him is necessarily also a serpent from whence it follows that sin has the same name as the one who engendered it (336 B).

Demons: "Brother."

As Providence placed a guardian angel at the side of each of us, the killer of the race likewise employed a demon against us. Man in his spiritual and reasonable parts can be called a brother to the angel who comes to assist against Pharaoh (340 A, B).

"Our fall is so familiar to us that we take it for our true nature -- it is the false brother. The angelic life which at first appears contrary to our nature is our true brother."¹ The angel of God and the angel of Satan; identical expressions as angel and brother inasmuch as both are called brother (341 A).

Killing of the firstbornGregory

Those who engage the battle vs. evil inclinations must stop the evil movements at their first appearance. The true Lamb casts aside the first introduction of evil in us (353 B) and his blood

Aurobindo

Indra smites the Python (Ahi) coiled across the fountains, sealing up their outflow (107). Vṛtra is the power that obstructs and prevents the free movement of the illumined rivers of the Truth (129, 160, 231) and is slain by Indra (283). Vṛtra is the Serpent, the grand Adversary (433).

The Panis offer friendship to Indra if he will stay in their cave; they offer brotherhood to Saramā if she will dwell with them rather than go back to the far world of the gods (272).

In a hymn to Indra, he is asked "not to become in us the Pani" (1.33), i.e., do not withhold your light in the superconscient as do the Panis in their subconscient secrecy (270).

Aurobindo

In reference to hymn 4.3, Aurobindo says as follows: "The hymn opens with a call to men to create Agni who sacrifices in the truth, to create him in his form of golden light (hiranyarūpam [4.3.1], the

1. Daniélou's note to 396 B.

Gregory

prevents the killer from introducing himself interiorly.

Aurobindo

gold being always the symbol of the solar light of the Truth, rtamjyotih) before the Ignorance can form itself, purā tanayitnor acittāt (4.3.1). The god is asked to awaken the work of man and the truth in him as being himself 'the Truth-conscious who places aright the thought,' rtasya bodhy ritacit svādhīh (4.3.4) — for all falsehood is merely a wrong placing of the Truth. He is to refer all fault and sin and defect in man to the various godheads or divine powers of the Divine Being so that it may be removed and the man declared finally blameless before the Infinite Mother — anāgasah aditaye (1.24.13) or for the infinite existence as it is elsewhere expressed." (238-9).

The TrumpetsGregory

The true trumpet is the divine sermon; it is the voice of the Holy Spirit (376 A, B); the proclamation of the wisdom which shines in the universe; the gnosis of divine power proceeds from the contemplation of the universe; the purified heart's ear is led by this sound to penetrate to where God is (377 D; 380 A).

Aurobindo

The advance of the Angirasas is the forward movement of the cry of heaven by which the mountain is penetrated; Brhaspatī's voice is the thunder of heaven when, as Angirasa, he discovers the sun, dawn, cow and light of the Word. Agni the Seer Will voices the thunder chant of the superconscious heavens (211, 247, 514).

Similarities and differences in the treatment of Sacrifice as journey-battle-ascent. Most of the following is directly quoted from the Contemplation...and On the Veda.

SacrificeGregory

God designed to be born to our life to bring back to being what

Aurobindo

Sacrifice is, psychologically, the coming to self-consciousness of

Gregory

has fallen away; for we had lost being because of the growing weakness of our will (381 B). The redemptive Passion is pre-existent in the divine thought (384 D).

One who presents his body as a living sacrifice will not overload his soul with a vestment of dense and carnal life, but by purity will render all the actions of his life as light as a spider's web (388 C, D). One who carries in him the characters of the image of God (through expressing it) presents a perfect likeness with its archetype, having his soul beautified with incorruptibility, immutability and immunity to all evil (429 A).

"The right hand of the Most High" which is "in the bosom of the Father," is adapted to our image when it goes out to manifest itself to us....Far from his unalterable nature being susceptible of change and decay, on the contrary, it is ours which though passible, was transfigured and became changeless by participation in the divine immutability (336 A).

Aurobindo

individual cosmic activity...the whole process of the universe is by nature a voluntary or involuntary sacrifice (316).

Man, by combining inner sacrifice and right mental action can convert the universal powers of Nature into their proper or divine nature. The mortal becomes immortal (77).

Agni is the Deva, the All-Seer, manifested as conscious-force or, as it would be called in modern language, Divine or Cosmic Will, first hidden and building up the eternal worlds, then manifest, "born," building up in man the Truth and the Immortality (135-6)Agni, this Immortal in mortals who in the sacrifice takes the place of the ordinary will and knowledge of man, from the mortal and physical consciousness to the immortality of the Truth and the Beatitude (135-6).

The following discussion will be an attempt to relate as closely as possible the treatments of sacrifice as (a) journey; (b) battle, and (c) ascent, in the interest of showing how the symbolism of Gregory and Aurobindo is distinct yet mutually illuminative.

Journey

The Divine initiative: Power; Light; Beatitude

Gregory: Among the symbols of God's power, his shoulders are shown to his follower (408 D, 412 C). The Holy Ghost as guide (361 C) may also signify Light, for it is his aspect as pillar of cloud and fire that represents his grace (361 B, C). Power is also a property of the Spirit, for he "noughts in the water all pursuers" (361 B, C). Beatitude is the gift of the Good which forever draws those who raise their eyes to it; and the soul is stretched by its own desire for that which lies always before it (404 A).

Aurobindo: Power is represented by Agni — the Steed of the journey (515); but he also dispenses Light by pouring out the milk of the herds and knowledge (578). Light is also represented by Indra who aids the journey (3.31.7; 193). Continual progress in growth is the gift of Pūshan the Increaser (a form of Sūrya) (531), and Beatitude is carried in the Ashwin's car in the forms of bodily, vital and mental satisfactions (375).

The Divine-human action

Gregory

Power: The Rock is the ground of the Divine-human journey, for without establishment in it there is no movement forward (405 D). (Cf. Agni as Impeller of cosmic movement and journey, 578.)

Light: The Rock is Christ (I Cor. 10, 4; 368 A) and therefore also the Light (332 C. D).

Beatitude: The Space in which the creature may run is, says Gregory, "so great that in travelling through it I shall never be

able to find the end of the path (405 B). And, in so far as the vision of God consists in the making of perpetual desire for him, the beatific journey is endless (404 A).

Aurobindo

Power: The Angirases (like the Children in the Wilderness) are pilgrims, literally "sons" (putra) of the Light (3.53.7; 209). The power to make this movement is obviously grounded in Agni, for the Angirases are the flames or lustres of Agni (see 10.62) in their divine aspect, born in heaven of the divine Flame (185). Therefore the Angirasa Rishis function as powers of Agni, their father, Sons¹ of Force or of Energy (8.60.2: sahasah sūno angirah; 8.84.4: agne angira ūrjo napāt). (185, 187, 188)

Light: Agni is the burning force of Light and the Angirases are the burning powers of the Light (188). Brhaspati is called Angirasa (6.73.1), the seven-mouthed and seven-rayed (6.50.4, 5); and so, also, is Indra, Lord of Swar, who accompanied the Angirases on the path (3.31.7). (190, 192, 193)

Beatitude: May the Angirases who hasten through to the goal move in their travelling to the bliss of the divine Savitri; and that (bliss) may our great Father, he of the Sacrifice, and all the gods becoming of one mind accept in heart (7.52.3). This journey is a grow-into the godhead through the action in us of the gods (216).

1. See Gonda, op. cit., pp. 1, 13, 97. The line of "descent" from Agni's "sire" to Agni as sūnuh sahasah, "son of power" to the Angirases illustrates the principle that material things bear and express a mystical reality, they being really informed, by this transforming power which sanctifies them accordingly as they are given to the disposal of the divine. Philosophically, this is a variety of mystical realism.

The human action

Gregory

Power: singleness of purpose required (420 C).

Light: Faith must be put in what is not exposed to the eyes of everyone (388 A).

Beatitude: In dispensing with conceptions grounded on opinion and ordinary commerce before one can attempt climbing the mountain of the knowledge of God (373 D, 377 D).

Aurobindo

Power: Men must slay Vṛtra and pass beyond heaven and earth¹ (225).

Light: The treasure of the Panis is acquired by wise men who travel toward the goal (2.24.6; 207) — the paths are made manifest by the removal of darkness (196).

Beatitude: The Aryan, god or man, arrives at the highest knowledge-vision (259).

The Battle

The Divine Initiative

Gregory

Power: God, as our armour (412 B).

Light: The divine Light supplies power over enemies (336 D).

Beatitude: The true Lamb casts aside the first introduction of evil in us (353 B).

1. Cf. especially 1.32.15 which suggests that Indra's slaying of Vṛtra is not final.

Aurobindo

Power: Agni with his blows breaks down the walls that limit (7.6.5; 275).

Light: ...slay the foe, cleave out the Cows, O Indra (6.17.3).
(This presupposes, in Aurobindo, that cows are illuminations, herds¹ of the sun).

Beatitude: The gods war with the titans for the possession of man's immortality.

The Divine-human actionGregory

Power: The God-man's blood prevents the killer from introducing himself interiorly (353 B, 412 B).

Light: We clothe ourselves with Jesus Christ who is the Light (412 B).

Beatitude: Heavenly food fortifies us in accordance with the vigour we show in battle (372 D).

Aurobindo

Power: Agni's mares bear the Hero, the battling power within us (215).

Light: Indra, strong with Soma "wine," and the Angirasas violently break open the hill -- the defeat of Vala releases the herds (161, 168).

Beatitude: The whole vitalistic existence is transfigured into the divine-human expression of Life and Desire (428).

1. The cows are the waters (in the Indra-Vṛtra myth) which are pregnant with the sun (sūrya). (10.49, 10; 6.50.7).

The human actionGregory

Power: The two shields, faith and the life lived according to conscience repulse the darts of the wicked (392 B, C).

Light: The sword is taken to demonic movements of the soul — expressions of the powers of darkness accompanying us since the Fall (396 A, 340 A, B).

Beatitude: Becoming God's friend is the proper end of the virtuous life (428 B, 429 C, D).

Aurobindo

Power: The Rishis are warriors as well as powers of Agni and are the heroes of the Vedic war (3.53.7; 190).

Light: The Light must be continually fought for (242).

Beatitude: The human soul is a house which offers a seat of sacrifice to be spread for the celestial session (438-9).

The AscentThe Divine initiativeGregory

Power: The soul finds always, in that which it has realized, a new thrust enabling it to fly higher (401 A, B).

Light: Inasmuch as one falls, spiritually, by a self-privation of the light (348 B, C), it is clear that Light is always available to him who will receive it and it will accompany him on his ascent. (For Gregory, it is of the essence of the creature that it be moving.)

Beatitude: All desire for Beauty which entails this ascension is stretched in the measure it advances its course toward Beauty (404 D).

Anurobindo

Power: Indra creates the world of truth and knowledge when he has ascended the mountain (266-7).¹ (Cf. 6.22.2 and 1.62.4)

Light: Agni's mission is to raise the soul from obscurity to light (441). Whereas the other gods awake with the Dawn, Agni wakes also in the Night, keeping his vision even in the darkness of the densest obscurity (441).²

Beatitude: The goal of the ascent is referred to as the highest seat of Vishnu, Delight, the last of Vishnu's three strides.

The Divine-human action

Gregory

Power: The Incarnation has effected the transfiguration of our nature (336 A).

Light: Christ, the Power and the Wisdom of God is both the heavenly and the earthly tabernacle, containing the whole of spiritual creation in the first; and in the second, he is head of the Church whose true members are called lights (381 B, C; also see note p. 116 of '41 edition).

Beatitude: Fixity in the good (the Rock) provides the heart with "wings" on the voyage to the heights -- the Rock here being Christ the fullness of virtue (405 D).

1. These are especially closely associated in the work of ascending transformation.

2. Cf. Brhad-āraṇyaka Upaniṣad, 4.3.1-6.

Aurobindo

Power: Agni's tongue leaps forward, like the thunderbolt of Indra that wars for the cows, to assail the powers of darkness in the hill of heaven (6.6.3, 4, 5; 187).

Light: The divine powers in man rise out of their ordinary appearances to the shining Truth beyond (1.72; 251).

Beatitude: This Truth is the passage and the ante-chamber¹ of the goal -- the Bliss of the divine existence (111).

The human action

Gregory

Power: The spirit must raise itself ceaselessly toward the truly great and divine (429 D).

Light: Whereas at first religious knowledge comes as a light one comes to know that God transcends all knowledge. One must prepare then to rise forever into this "darkness" (376 D, 377 A).

Beatitude: The soul continually feeds its desire for what remains still hidden, by that which it discovers without ceasing (401 D).

Aurobindo

Power: The Aryan houses in him a brilliant force of battle (259).

Light: He arrives at highest knowledge -- vision (259).

1. Note the figures "passage" and "ante-chamber" are symbols similar in effect to Gregory's treatment of the "tabernacle" awaiting entry upon the successful climb of the mountain of the knowledge of God.

Beatitude: As a bird, the Hansa, the soul of man soars beyond the physical and mental consciousness, ascending the path of Truth (428). The goal for the human being is the Ananda, the divine Beatitude — that which is all honey (4.58.10; 122). (However, Ananda is not mentioned in 4.58.10, and Aurobindo's commentary results upon his interpreting honey as Ananda.)

Comparison of Some Essential Differences in Doctrine

There is always considerable difficulty in comparing elements of faith in one religious tradition with those of another. One requires to pass between the Scylla of apologetics and the Charybdis of the "Perennial Philosophy."

1. For instance, the well known hostility of Christian neo-orthodoxy toward mysticism as evidenced by the writings of Karl Barth and others. Also the radical drive towards discontinuity and separation of religion and culture in some defenders of this apologetic by-passes sacramental Christianity almost entirely, for the essence of the latter is not the negative realization of the gulf between the gospel and culture, but rather that whereas this gulf no doubt exists the vital aspect of the gospel is its power to transfigure culture while judging it through our participation in the redemptive and transforming love of God.

2. Aldous Huxley and A. K. Coomaraswamy have stoutly maintained the Philosophia Perennis and, I believe, most skilfully. However, there are many aspects to the recognition of "a divine Reality substantial to the world of things and lives and minds...." (Aldous Huxley, The Perennial Philosophy [New York, 1945], p. vii), not the least being the specific religious tradition and Revelation through which one achieves said recognition. Granted that the tradition cannot be equated with the 'recognition,' nevertheless, the recognition must be qualified in some sort by the means taken to see. Coomaraswamy, in particular, tends to see such a plethora of parallel among the various traditions that one is led to believe that only cultural conditioning can account for the apparent differences, the message of each tradition being essentially the same when approached for its esoteric meaning.

The tendency of the former is to divide so sharply one tradition from another that relevance between them is too often overlooked. On the other hand, the latter tends to gloss over implications of serious import and so obscures disrelationships which, when examined closely may, and sometimes can, illuminate one another.

It is with this caution in mind that the following elements of this study will be undertaken: 1) Agnus Dei, Agni Deva; 2) The Rock.

These elements will be compared bearing in mind the differences between Hinduism and Christianity and the very considerable contribution made by the perspective of the ¹philosophia perennis.

Agnus Dei and Agni Deva

Whereas Coomaraswamy sees in Agnus Dei and Agni Deva — the sacrificial lamb and sacrificial horse or bull — "equivalent illuminations of the understanding,"² it is not so clear that this equivalence is to be found in the Contemplation and On the Veda. It is important to notice what distinctions hold here, because of the paradigmatic equivalences that appear in the Exodus story as treated by Gregory and the legend of the Angirasas — itself, if not an Exodus, a pastoral journey to a destination promising better things.

1. This contribution has been strongest perhaps in the attempts of its defenders to relate the spiritual content of disparate theological concepts held by the mystics of the great religious traditions. This has encouraged a religious and devotional approach to the study of comparative religion and the history of religion.

2. Coomaraswamy, A New Approach to the Vedas, p. 24.

Insofar as paradigmatic equivalences are the question it is not necessary to beg the historical question. (Aurobindo is of the opinion that the Angirasa Rishis parable is "on the whole the most important of all the Vedic myths" (158). There is a sense in which one might be encouraged to see in this parable a certain "Old Testament" relation to the developments of later Indian religious thought and it is in precisely this light that some significant comparisons can be made between the Contemplation and On the Veda; for their respective authors approach their subjects from points of view enriched and overlaid with tradition. When, added to these, one recognizes that both works are, in part, reflections of individual, personal, devotional insight, what parallels, if any can be ascertained should prove all the more significant of points of meeting for differing traditions.

(a) Agni is the Deva's manifestation as Divine or Cosmic Will -- hidden as the builder of the eternal worlds, and then "born" by building up in man the Truth and the Immortality (136). Sometimes alone and sometimes with Indra, he breaks up the cave in the Rock to release the herds -- but this action is more frequently referred to Bṛhaspati (163). Essentially, Agni is the power and priest of the sacrifice as Bṛhaspati is the father, lord or "husband" of the Vedic Word (164). Agni, identified with the will, is invoked for moral functions as purifier from sin (8).

(b) He is called the son of the waters -- he of the swift rush-
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 ings (128). The gods find him in the Waters, in the working of the

1. Coomaraswamy (op. cit., p. 26) identifies the Waters with the Mother Wisdom (vāc). But in Christian doctrine except for Sophia, Wisdom is generally associated with the Logos. Julian of Norwich significantly refers to Christ as Mother.

Sisters -- the sevenfold waters of the truth "brought from the heights of our being by Indra" (137). The gods give him force, splendour and body, and his joy is increased by the seven rivers who labour over him as the Mares (3.1.4; 137). Agni has "three" births: 1) In the earth's growths as material heat and fire; 2) as the Horse, symbol of the dynamic force of Life; and as the heavenly fire. In this stage he is the child of the waters giving the middle world, the vital plane, full form and extension. 3) Finally, into the many forms of infinite consciousness as the son of the goddess of bliss. He is reached here by the divine powers in man, the gods, using the mind as instrument and thus he is set to the great work of the world (137-40). This divine force is kindled by gods and men by lighting the fires of the inner sacrifice. Thus Agni, the Immortal in mortals replaces our ordinary will and knowledge with the immortal Truth and Beatitude (136).

When Agni pours out upon us the honeyed plenty of the "Father of things" he bears and becomes the Son -- the soul in man revealed in its universality (139).¹ Agni's functions are principally three. He, as illumined energy, builds up the worlds; he is the Purohita, the priest of the human sacrifice; and exalts man to the Highest (65).

When Agni is compared with Christ the Sacrificial Lamb, certain differences appear within the similarities of functions as Priest and Son. First of all, Gregory nowhere, in the Contemplation, suggests

1. Cf. Eckhart, Deutsche Predigten und Traktate, Joseph Quint, p. 150: "Wer weiter nichts als die Kreaturen erkannte, der brauchte an keine Predigt zu denken, denn jegliche Kreatur ist Gottes voll und ist ein Buch."

that Christ is the manifestation of the Divine or Cosmic Will as such, but rather that he is the manifestation of the "right hand of the Father." The Old Testament image of right hand has the general sense of that which exercises control and creativity and shows a close functional parallel. Nevertheless, the distinctive feature in the Contemplation is the role of Christ not merely as a cosmic power -- an intermediary between the Unknown and the empirical world -- but as the manifestation of that Unknown, the Most High Himself. Therefore, spiritual progress is, for Gregory, always a progress in One who comprehends not only the ultimate Transcendence, but also the ultimate Immanence in man -- as does Agni, the latter in his role as the Immortal in the mortal. The economy of the Son as Christ would seem to differ in this respect from the "economy" of Agni as Cosmic Will. An interesting similarity offers itself in the three births of Agni with Bethlehem, Resurrection and Ascension, but they are very far from exact -- the differences being decisive not only in the historical order, but also in the theological.

Among the epithets of Agni reminiscent of the Christ figure are the following: priest of the sacrifice, the young sage, the beloved guest, the lord in the creature, the divine child, the pure
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 and virgin God, the invincible warrior, the leader on the path who marches in front of the human peoples (cf. Gregory, 408 D), the immortal in mortals, the infinite in being, the vast and flaming sun of the Truth, the divine perception, light, vision, the firm foundation (444).

1. Cf. the Logos as androgynous.

Insofar as the redemptive Passion is pre-existent in the divine thought (384 D), this might be said equally by both Gregory and Aurobindo, for the sacrifice of Agni is cosmic and perpetual. Nevertheless, there is a different reference for both in that Aurobindo sees sacrifice as a coming to self-consciousness of individual and cosmic activity (316), while Gregory continually stresses the role of the will — the Fall itself being described in terms of disfunctional will, rather than in terms of ignorance. However, it would be misleading to state that neither author associates knowledge and will, functionally. Agni is the Seer-Will and Christ is the means to knowledge of God, but the difference in stress in respect of human condition is most important to observe. Note Aurobindo's "For it is the Will that is the chief effective agent of the inner sacrifice, but a Will that is in harmony with the Truth, guided therefore by a purified discernment" (88).¹ Here the will is subject to the power to know. In Gregory, however, the goal of this life is to be called the servants of God owing to our actions (428 B), and seems to accord with John 7:17: if any man's will is to do his [God's] will, he shall know...; though Gregory does not refer to this passage² in the Contemplation.

1. "Force, the Horse, is as necessary as Light the Cow; not only must Vala be reached and the light won from his jealous grasp, but Vritra must be slain and the waters released" (165).

2. This is also Jacob Boehme's teaching, who makes Adam's fall contingent upon his unwillingness to remain obedient in the divine Harmony. Therefore God "caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam and he slept (Gen. 2:21). Thus he fell "from divine Harmony into ego-centric harmony, i.e., into the aroused properties of evil and good." The Way to Christ trans. J. Stoudt (New York and London, 1947).

Perhaps, inasmuch as both Gregory and Aurobindo never dis-
sever will and knowledge, this question is purely academic, but I
believe important conclusions may follow from one or the other in re-
gard of the Fall doctrine to be noted later in this chapter. In any
case it would be useless to approach the problem from the presupposi-
tion that it is the dichotomy of will and intellect that is fundamental
here. On the contrary, it is necessary to bear in mind their funda-
mental interdependence and proceed to enquire into their functional
relationship.

(c) It is well to note that Agni, the Divine Force "contains
and sustains all the other divine powers in their working; in him re-
sides therefore the power of all the other godheads" (497). This
is interesting in comparison with Col. 2:9. Nevertheless, the dis-
tinction previously made with regard to the economy of the Son sets
apart a true correlation. The Christ figure contains not only all
the fulness of deity bodily but insofar as he is more than a cosmic
power or psychic force behind and within all cosmic things (550)¹
his sacrifice in terms of the initiative of the transcendent Deity is
all the more remarkable. The problem of the relation of R̥g Veda
(10.90), the sacrifice by the gods of Puruṣa, the Person, to Christ's
incarnation is not proper to this study as this puruṣa is not devel-
oped in On the Veda. Nevertheless it is worth mentioning that

1. Coomaraswamy (op. cit., p. 75) is of the opinion that in the R̥g Veda
Indra is wholly an angel of this world. This does not comport well
with Aurobindo's opinion of Indra's lordship of Swar, which seems
transcendent in relation to this world, i.e., 'the heaven above
heaven' (170).

W. N. Brown is of the opinion that Puruṣa seems to be a blend of characteristics of 1) Agni as essence of natural growths, the sacrifice; as the lord of immortality and the sacrifice; 2) Sūrya "as rising above the worlds to the place of immortality; 3) Viṣṇu as the encompasser of earth air and sky. Puruṣa is both the essence of creatures and also the inclusive principle, the first principle, the ruler, the immortal, the eternal. He is neither Agni, Sūrya, nor Viṣṇu alone, nor is he a combination of the three. He is a combination of characteristics derived from them, fused in a rather shadowy way in a new unity with essential reference to the sun.¹ Brown's conclusion accords better with that of Aurobindo in regard of the transcendent reference of the gods. Yet the cosmic aspect is still the most dominant, and there is no question of an incarnation strictly comparable with the Christ figure.² It has been mentioned (supra, 131) that

1. W. Norman Brown, The Sources and Nature of pūrūṣa in the Puruṣāsūkta, JAOS, 51, 133.

2. The whole question of avatārhood is also outside the formal scope of this study, though had the concept of sacrifice been expanded beyond the two works herein studied, the Bodhisattva concept would properly be within its scope. It is worth noting that the cosmical reference for deity lends itself well to the avatār doctrine. The question whether the acosmical view of the Transcendent does not equally suggest it is also relevant. A God beyond God seems equally difficult to accommodate to the Christian doctrine of the incarnation as does a god of cosmos, but what is in acosmical or cosmical theology to deny avatārhood? The difference between the Christ figure and avatārhood, while not a particular problem for dogmatics — Christian or non-Christian — is a very difficult problem for philosophy of religion, and particularly for a Christian theosophy. It becomes a problem for dogmatics only if and when the postulates of dogma are considered to relate to other traditions more benignly than has been usually the case since the Reformation.

Agni comprehends the ultimate Immanence in man, but he also comprehends the ultimate Transcendence (when he is "fully grown") in the form of Truth. But how can we know that he also comprehends the That as That or the Godhead itself, from the Rg Veda? Aurobindo states that the Truth, the Vast and Agni's own home are identical (79), that it is the vast Truth, ṛtam br̥hat, of Swar, and in Swar there is the fulfilment of the tridhātu "a phrase often used for the supreme triple principle forming the triune highest world" (263). The expression, world, is prevailing in On the Veda: the sacrifice of the Purusha is "the great world Sacrifice" (418); and even the well of honey in the rock is the Ānanda, "the divine beatitude of the supreme threefold world of bliss, the Satya, Tapas and Jana ¹ worlds of the Purāṇic system based upon the three supreme principles, Sat, Chit-Tapas and Ānanda; their base is Swar of the Veda, Mahar ² of the Upanishads and Purāṇas, the world of Truth. These four together make the fourfold fourth world.... Sometimes, however, this upper world ³ seems to be divided into two, Swar the base, Mayas or the divine beatitude the summit, so that there are five worlds or births of the ascending soul" (203). (This commentary is in connection with the hymn to Bṛhaspati (2.24); but Agni is the 'first' Angirasa, i.e., the supreme and original (1.31.1; 187,188), the Flame from whom the

1. Jñāna?

2. Mahat?

3. Māyā?

Angirasas are born, and Br̥haspati, Master of the creative word, is the one Angirasa as seven-rayed Thinker, seven-faced or seven-mouthed, nine and ten rayed [279, 280, 207]).

When the cosmic aspect is not dominant, then the reference is more personal, but more in terms of consciousness than will. The Vast is the foundation of the infinite consciousness, Aditi (137), Supreme Nature, source of the later idea of Prakriti [prakṛti] or Shakti [śakti] (113). Thought, being and consciousness are aspects of each other (141), and Aditi is the infinite mother from whom the gods are born (141).

Aurobindo is of the opinion that the Veda's fundamental conception forbids the arrangement of the supreme Trinity and lesser gods of Purāṇic development. There was only one universal Deva of whom all the gods were alike forms and cosmic aspects -- "each of them is ¹ in himself the whole Deva and contains all the other gods" -- but this supreme and only Deva is, in the Riks, left "vague and undefined." Upanishadic thought led to the Puranic formulation of ² Brahmā, Vishnu and Rudra (396). Vishnu, the all-pervading, the up-³holder of the five worlds and of the triple divine principle the fountain of the honey "wine," he the Lord of transcendent existence

1. Cf. Max Müller's "henotheism" or "kathenotheism" and RV 1.164.46.

2. I.e., Śiva.

3. "Sachchidananda [saccidānanda] of the Vedānta"; the Vedic "vasu, substance, īrj, abounding force of our being, priyam, or mayas, delight and love in the very essence of our existence" (399).

and delight is a cosmic Deity (398, 399, 400). This limitation, perhaps more than any other, prevents a closer relationship between the Vedic "one and only Deva" and the "Most High" of Christianity, insofar as the Contemplation and On the Veda provide the comparison.

The Rock

For Gregory the Rock's interior holds a cross; for Aurobindo, a well of honey. On the face of it this would suggest a fundamental incompatibility of imagery and one might be tempted to leave it at that. But further study will show that, just as with the distinction between the will and intellect, the distinction between suffering and delight calls for a functional integration rather than an either/or. This functional integration requires a distinction of priority and the choice made here will fundamentally determine one's view of sacrifice; "journey, battle and beatitude." That the journey is infinitely progressive; that the battle is against demonic powers and that the "end" is beatitude is attested by both authors. The question of difference, if any, must concern the means by which the sacrifice is realized.

First of all it will be necessary to show that in relation to the cross, Gregory is not unmindful of beatitude, and that in relation to the well of honey Aurobindo is not unmindful of suffering.

Gregory notes that the space in the Rock which, he says, Scripture calls a cross, is for St. Paul (II Cor: 5.1) the abode not made with hands, prepared in heaven in hope for the day when our earthly tent will be destroyed. (405D) And, further, whoever finishes his

course in this vast arena, having kept the faith and planted his feet firmly upon the rock (II Tim. 4:7), will be crowned with a crown of justice by the president of the contest — then follows a list of epithets for this reward, called here the cross in the rock, in other passages the "paradise of delight" and so on, including "the kingdom of heaven." (408A, B) Moses' entrance into the Rock indicates the same thing as these expressions, says Gregory, for Christ is called the Rock by Paul, and we believe that Christ contains all the many hopes, for we know all the treasures are in him (408 B).¹ This is another of Gregory's paradoxes, that entrance into the cross is at one and the same time entrance into beatitude, albeit an ecstasy enjoyed and deferred, for the immortality is "prepared in heaven in hope...." i.e., it exists now, but will be realized "when our earthly tent will be destroyed." Even the reward at the end of the course — the "crown of justice" — is called the cross in the rock. The beginning and the end is symbolized by that which represents both suffering and victory and one is led to infer that the key to this mystery lies in the transfiguration of suffering itself rather than the achievement of delight.² Christ the creator (the

1. This passage is of particular importance for the God-man doctrine. As Daniélou says, "Passage important qui montre que pour Grégoire le Logos n'est pas un intermédiaire dans l'ascension vers le Père, qu'il faut dépasser: comme c'est le cas pour Philon, pour Eunomius, un peu pour Origène. Il élimine tout subordinatisme, comme le montre bien Lieske, Zur Theologie der Christus-mystik Gregors von Nyssa, Scholastik, 1939, pp. 485 sqq."

2. Delight is used here in its eschatological sense and does not refer to transient pleasure. Nevertheless, this religious delight is not, for Gregory, the means and end, but rather is it the cross, which when transfigured into reward yet remains the cross.

right Hand of the Most High), is the Rock and the living, victorious, beatific cross (the Priest and sacrifice of the pre-existent sacrifice itself).

It is possible that Aurobindo's thought is in dialectical contrast with this, and, if so, holds a deep relation to it. The following passages contribute to this view:

"Soma, Lord of the Ānanda, is the true creator who possesses the soul and brings out of it a divine creation. For him the mind and heart, enlightened, have been formed into a purifying instrument; freed from all narrowness and duality the consciousness in it has been extended widely to receive the full flow of the sense-life and mind-life and turn it into pure delight of the true existence, the divine, the immortal Ānanda...

"....The "wine" of the divine Life poured into the system is a strong, overflowing and violent ecstasy; it cannot be held in the system unprepared for it by strong endurance of the utmost fires of life and suffering and experience. The raw earthen vessel not baked to consistency in the fire of the kiln cannot hold the Soma-"wine"; it breaks and spills the precious liquid. So the physical system of the man who drinks this strong wine of Ānanda must by suffering and conquering all the torturing heats of life have been prepared for the secret and fiery heats of the Soma; otherwise his conscious being will not be able to hold it; it will spill and lose it as soon as or even before it is tasted or it will break down mentally and physically under the touch" (406, 407). When to this is added that "...pure

Bliss...is the original cause of creation" (445), that "Soma is the generator of the world of becoming, for from the Ānanda, from the all-blissful One they all proceed; delight is the parent of existences" (409), the position comes to view more clearly.

The relation of the fathers, the ancient Rishis to "the Lord of Ānanda who gives us the splendours of the Truth" is another essential distinguishing factor; for these fathers, receiving His creative knowledge (Māyā) did, by that consciousness of the Supreme Divinity, form in man an image of Him as "a child unborn, a seed of the godhead in man, a Birth that has to be delivered out of the envelope of the human consciousness." (409) And with the gifts of Soma, namely, "the splendours of the Truth and the plenitudes of the Vast" we¹ attain to Immortality. The image of the Divine is formed in man by man (the fathers), and this image is the image of the Lord of Ānanda. Except for the human formation of the image, Gregory's position is similar, for, just as in Aurobindo, the realization of the image is a future event. But the signal difference lies in that for Aurobindo this divine seed is to be delivered out of the envelope of the human consciousness; but in Gregory the resemblance to God is the goal of

1. This is an important concept, particularly in view of the much criticism that has been directed against Hinduism as a religion that has little place for the action of divine grace. Aurobindo is not unmindful of the action of grace: "There are two powers that alone can affect in their conjunction the great and difficult thing which is the aim of our endeavour, a fixed and unfailing aspiration that calls from below and a supreme Grace from above that answers." The Mother, p. 1. Cf. prasāda (especially devaprasādi) twice in Upaniṣads. Also in Bhagavadgītā.

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the virtuous life.

Gregory makes the Lord of the Sacrifice the creator and the former of the divine image, the realization of which was gravely impaired at the Fall. Aurobindo makes the Lord of Delight the creator whose knowledge was discovered by men and used to form a divine potentiality in man. In Gregory's view a wrong use of the will prevented man from an infinite realization of his true potentiality until the Incarnation; in Aurobindo's view, a right use of the mind provided man with a divine potentiality through the Truth-vision. Gregory would seem to see immortality as a consequence of a proper relation to freedom, and Aurobindo's freedom as a consequence of the achievement of immortality. Yet, when the distinction is drawn thus sharply, we are in danger of making it appear that Gregory offers only a mystical view of the will and Aurobindo one of intellect as super-conscious vision. This appearance is a mirage. Gregory's progress in virtue -- progress as being the essence of virtue -- is equally a progress in vision,² and though Aurobindo chooses the Cow as the most important symbol in the Veda (141), cf. supra, nevertheless "Force the Horse is as necessary as Light the Cow" (165), and "The Herds and

1. Daniélou's note on Gregory's seeming earlier views as rather Plotinian is interesting in view of Aurobindo's closer relation to Plotinus than to the later Gregory; supra, p. 42.

2. Perhaps no Scriptural text better supports Gregory's Contemplation than the Johannine "This is the life eternal, to be growing in the knowledge of thee the only true God, and of him whom thou hast sent." John 17:3, trans. The Interpreters Bible, VIII (1952), 442. However, the reference is not adduced topically in the Contemplation.

the waters are the two principal images of the Veda; the former are the trooping Rays of the divine Sun, herds of the luminous Consciousness; the waters are the outpouring of the luminous movement and impulse of the divine or supramental existence" (493 n.). Even though the Rishis attained by the mind, the mind was not the goal of the attainment. How could it be if the inspired Thought is sent to the seer out of the Vast? (318). Thus the mind is merely instrumental — not an end in itself. Rather, the goal is Light, Power and Bliss i.e., Knowledge, Force and Delight, the three powers of the divine Life (316). Indeed, "Will is the first necessity, the chief actualizing force," and the "race of mortals" must turn consciously towards the "great aim," the "vastest of all works, the most grandiose of all efforts" which is to "seek to form the divine in themselves" as "the Aryans who do the work and accept the effort"; for what, asks Aurobindo, is "the Aryan without the divine Will (Agni) that accepts the labour and the battle, works and wins, suffers and triumphs?" (321).

Clearly, the better place to begin comparison is the first adduced i.e., the transfiguration of suffering itself through the cross; and the achievement of delight. (The classical argument of ¹ priority for will or intellect is not basic to our comparison, nor does it suit well the kind of works being compared — neither being

1. I do not mean to suggest that it is not germane, but that it would more obscure than reveal differences between Gregory and Aurobindo; for whom doing and seeing are complementary aspects of our relation to the divine.

philosophical argument in the strict sense).

Berdyaev has made an attempt to separate Aurobindo's thought from essentially Christian thought on the premise that Aurobindo teaches "that we are the authors of our actions must be rejected -- it is the universal which acts through our personality. Impersonality is the essential qualification for union with the divine. It is necessary to attain impersonality and apathy. The soul is a particle of the divine."¹ He refers to Aurobindo's Essays on the Gita. Whereas Berdyaev has caught an essential thread here in Aurobindo's pattern, the quotation needs to be related to the context and when presented in isolation suggests that Aurobindo has no struggle with the mystery of personal existence in its direct relation to the Divine. It is sometimes difficult to distinguish between "personality" and "ego" in Aurobindo's texts, but Essays on the Gita (pp. 453, 489-490) shows this struggle at one of its greatest intensities. He maintains that the spiritual person, the Jīva² (not the ego) while remaining "a spiritual channel of the works of the transcendent and universal Spirit," a "portion of the Transcendent, creative," he, the Jīva, nevertheless "creates his own world around him even while he retains this cosmic consciousness in which are all others." This is a distinction which Berdyaev himself might have affirmed. Yet, Berdyaev is sensitive to a weakness in the formula-

1. N. Berdyaev, The Divine and the Human (London, 1954), p. 25.

2. Literally, the "life" or "living (soul)."

tion of this problem, namely in the distinction between the Creator and the creature which when lost degrades both, yet when maintained, invites a dualism which cannot whole-heartedly affirm the incarnation.

We are now close to the crux of the difference between Gregory and Aurobindo. The latter cannot free himself from enmeshing man in the toils of Nature; being unwilling to give up the idea of a divine determinism, he cannot comfortably apply himself to the question of man's radical spiritual freedom. This limitation -- a self-limitation seemingly in deference to Indian tradition -- makes for a critical ambivalence in his treatment of the nature of man. On the one hand he can say that there is no suggestion of the miraculous or supernatural in the Vedic idea of revelation (11) and, on the other, yet speak of the spirit's climb to "planes of thought and experience inaccessible to the natural or animal man" (12). There is no clear resolution of this ambiguity in On the Veda. Whereas the singularity of man in the universe is preserved in this commentary -- in part due to the vigor of the Rg Vedic outlook -- the idea of the Divine Līlā,¹ the spiritual determinism of all the life forces, early begins to assume the prior reference for the riddle of existence. Ultimately, man is seen as a spiritually determined actor in a divine drama, having issued from Delight and knowingly or ignorantly coursing toward reunion with Delight. He suffers because he is as yet an unfit vessel for bearing the divine ecstasy. He may consciously speed his prepara-

1. "Sport," "play."

tion or remain relatively unconscious in the cradle of Nature who as Mother is destined to rear her unwilling child according to her maternal role. There is great aesthetic appeal in this world-view which speaks of the All-Deva, and thus in spirit is of greater reach than Western ontologies that are grounded only in natural process. Nevertheless, man's spiritual odyssey is syncretized with that of Nature, not as though he were a Godward traveller responsible for Nature, one upon whom she depends for her fulfillment, but rather as one who must conform to Nature as World-Will. Thus an ontology is built upon Nature, using her as the cosmic principle under which man himself, at least in so far as his actions are concerned, must be subsumed. The tragico-sublime dynamism in the free relation between God, man and Nature is unrealistically referred to a Divine Play (līlā) and this objectification undercuts the spiritual tension necessary to a free development of truly personal existence for which the human ego is not a mere "shadow" but a neutral instrument in the hands of spirit, each created spirit. It is impossible to superimpose a biological determinism upon man -- as is often done in the West -- and maintain his spiritual freedom. It is equally impossible to superimpose a divine determinism upon man and maintain a distinction between him and World-Will which will allow of a genuinely creative spiritual encounter between both. One may speak of the "drama of life" as an expression of the "meaning of life" and still preserve personal freedom, because meaning continually issues from the exercise of personal freedom, and can be objectified dramatically e.g.,

"In the beginning was the Word." But when the drama itself, the Divine Play, is made the ground of meaning rather than its bearer, Delight is made Creator and the cosmic round assumes a sacred role which goes unquestioned. The glorious risk is swallowed up by "knowledge" of World-Will; by an objectification of meaning which, far from being objectively established, requires continually to be brought forth.¹

Perhaps this is where the most fruitful distinction between Hindu and Patristic thought really lies, insofar as both are concerned with the mystical journey to God: the polarity between the Cross and Delight (Ānanda) even though delight is viewed in the ground of sacrifice. Aurobindo seems to view the beginning in Sacrifice as Delight; and Gregory, the beginning in Love as Sacrifice.

Gregory, in making the Cross as the ground of meaning, may not objectify it, even if he would, precisely because the cross can never be objectified. It is not a drama to be contemplated as an objective universal. Rather, it is the risk of coming-to-be at all; not risk as gamble i.e., "all or nothing"; but all though nothing at all. It is perpetual because man, for Gregory, is always coming-to-be. Man may not rest secure in the knowledge of his predestination perfected through aeons of effort by World-Will (Nature) because

1. A telling criticism of assuming knowledge of World-Will is offered by Albert Schweitzer in his Indian Thought and its Development (Boston, 1957), chapter 16. Unfortunately this criticism is weakened by an inconclusive statement of how one may derive world-view from ethics.

Nature is not wholly on his side for better or for worse. He is more responsible for her than she for him, because in the Fall she was afflicted through him.

The "well of honey" in the Vedic Rock is hidden in the "hill of being." There is nothing to suggest that this well of light is individual to each discoverer; it is a well of light and bliss (honey) for the victorious Angirasas, at least collectively. However, in the case of the cross V. V. Zenkovsky notes that Matt. 16; 24 directs the follower of Christ to take up his (own) cross, showing that every man has his own cross. Further, this cross bears the closest relationship with a man's individuality, his depth, out of which grows his unrepeatable particularity. Therefore, he says, only when we take¹ our own cross upon ourselves can we discover our true individuality for it is our cross that reveals it. This cross is explained as the task which God puts to us, the entelechy of man's maturation process. It is therefore also a Way which we seldom incline to take when we fear to grow. Indeed, says Zenkovsky, the secret of man comprehends not only his structure (God's image in man as well as his social and material being) and dynamic of his life, but it lies in the decided task which man is called to realize in his life in order that he might² walk before God -- in other words, this secret is hidden in his cross.

This definition of "cross" accords well with the radical freedom

1. If "cross" can be equated with "burden," cf. Gal. 6:2, 5.

2. Basilius Zenkovsky, Das Bild vom Menschen in der Ostkirche (Stuttgart, 1951), pp. 63-65, 66.

which Gregory seeks to understand; that freedom of relationship between God and man which overcomes the dread Necessity which is superimposed upon man and God by either psycho-biological or spiritual determinisms. When the latter prevail, explicitly or implicitly, the cross is reduced to a symbol of misfortune -- of fate, even. Fortitude and endurance take the place of patience because suffering is understood as a necessary moment in the outworking of the natural or divine plan.¹ Again, the theme of the Divine Play is introduced and instead of the aesthetic motif as dominant, now it is the ethical.

It would be a mistake, however, to set Gregory off against Aurobindo as one wholly free from Aurobindo's point of view. But wherein they are in agreement cannot be brought into sharp relief until their positions are studied in terms of their points of departure and, as has been shown above, those points, namely the "cross" and the "well of honey" are quite distinct.

Both Gregory and Aurobindo concerned themselves with the

1. It is curious that Berdyaev, whose principal concern was a religious understanding of freedom and creativity, should have succumbed to a belief in the necessity of tragedy -- not merely in this world, but within the theogonic process itself. This leads him to the conclusion that freedom is a fatal gift that dooms man to perdition; that God has no power over non-being nor the evil which results from a freedom which he never created. God has also a career, like man, not essentially because he contains man's nature, but because both he and man are subject to the spiritual priority of the Ungrund, the depths of freedom. Berdyaev speaks of God's first and second acts and the birth of the Trinitary God. What is this but another Divine Play whose theme is not Delight but Tragedy? See, The Destiny of Man, pp. 23-28.

mystery of sexuality and both concluded that it was a distinct advantage for the spiritual life that one remain celibate. This is not so apparent in On the Veda as it is in other works and, in particular, in letters attributed to Aurobindo published since his death in 1950. Gregory's aversion to sexuality is very apparent in the Contemplation (421 D - 425 B), to say nothing of other works. Physicality, as we know it now, must be transcended and transfigured until a mode of reproduction is restored or achieved which will not require the sexual congress so characteristic of our present existence.¹ This negative askesis is far less a difficulty in Aurobindo's system than it is in Gregory's, for whereas the Indian tradition has generally associated sanctity and virginity inseparably, this cannot be said of the Christian tradition as a whole; and whereas Aurobindo is quite consistent (in relation to his view of the Divine Delight) in denying the sexual life to the seeker for the "well of honey," it is not at all clear that Gregory is consistent in doing so for the seeker of the "cross." If, however, the cross is equated with the "well of honey," which a superficial comparison would suggest, then a direct parallel is seen; but, as has been shown, this is without support. Aurobindo clearly has the advantage of consistency, if not of depth, while Gregory has that of opening up the question of freedom in relation to sacrifice yet limits himself by choosing a negative askesis for vantage point.

1. A discussion of sexuality in relation to freedom as understood by Gregory is described by Jérôme Gaith, La Conception de la Liberté chez Grégoire de Nysse (Paris, 1953), pp. 54-58. Aurobindo's The Mind of Light (New York, 1953), projects a somewhat detailed description of his vision of the human body in its divinized state, existing in non-contradiction to Supermind and subordinated to it; note pp. 37-38, 47, 61, 67, 70, 96.

There is another similarity in distinction which may be stated in broad generality. Both thinkers are oriented toward ontological formulation, Gregory inheriting through Origen a Greek formulation of the problem of Being; and Aurobindo choosing the Indian. It is not until both attempt to revise their inheritances that the most fruitful comparisons come into view. Sacrifice for Aurobindo becomes an action which relates one integrally to the cosmic process, and the relation is the touchstone for the formulation of sacrifice and its action. Sacrifice for Gregory is not disrelated to cosmic process, but insofar as man is free from divine or natural determinism, the exercise of this freedom before God is the proper end of sacrifice. Here man is not geared into cosmic process through effectual sacrifice, but on the contrary restores his essential transcension of cosmic process and responsibility for it. His nature is not only instrumental in relation to divine and cosmic will, but somehow also mysteriously creative. It is precisely this latter point which presupposes the doctrine of the Fall -- a doctrine absent from Aurobindo. It was not lost on Gregory that if the ultimate relation of man to God was one of man's negative instrumentality,¹ the doctrine of the Fall loses its religious ground and becomes but a myth to illuminate a metaphysical principle. (However, it must be observed

1. I mean by negative the idea that man is wholly passive in the hands of the Divine. Gregory seems not of that mind whereas Aurobindo's evolutionism points toward that direction. Gregory's radical doctrine of freedom is at a considerable remove from Aurobindo's spiritual determination.

that Gregory's doctrine of sin leaves much to be desired in that he inclines to define it often in terms of ignorance -- as does Aurobindo). The Fall is essentially a failure to realize task, i.e. the cross; and sacrifice is therefore less an accommodation to Divine and World-Will than the primary means to realize the unique, singular, unrepeatable creature which every created being is called upon to become. The relationship of one unique to another is not primarily logical, moral or aesthetic but wholly mysterious. Gregory maintains categorically the mysterious ground of every creature just as he does the ground of God or his

The significance of this study for further metaphysical inquiry

The categories, journey, battle and ascent are clearly dialectically related. It is useful to notice that the history of dialectic has offered numerous examples of systematic thought which depend upon the analysis of one or more of the three metaphysical equivalents of journey, battle and ascent. These equivalents might be expressed as process, encounter, correspondence -- the latter whether in terms of likeness (image) or identity.

The advantage of a study like this lies in its suggestibility for a religious metaphysic rather than in its analytical approach to any one aspect of a general system already extant.

1. An illuminating discussion of the distinction between nature and person is found in Vladimir Lossky, The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church, trans. (London, 1957), pp. 119-124.

Difficult as it is, too difficult sometimes, to read myth, it is helpful to remember that as the expression of religious insight it was the ground of philosophical enquiry from very early times and so it may continue to be now. Just as Scripture continually calls theology back to the contemplation of religious *ἀρχή* so does myth, philosophy. Both afford the thinker a relief from the sometimes arid intricacies of abstractions too far removed from fundamental assumptions, by helping him to see once again the whole object of his thought. Poetic symbolism has just this very power to check an overpreoccupation with any one factor in isolation. Poetic images invite union with their kind rather than division; and if the thinker can accomplish the difficult feat of reading and analysing oracle at one and the same time, he will achieve that balance of statement which even though polemical will never seem irrelevant to the world at large. Perhaps one of the reasons for the West's multiplicity of systems can be found in the often cavalier neglect of our religious heritage. For instance, the failure to take a comprehensive view of the problems that arise from the Christian gospel has led not only philosophy but theology also to emphasize one problem at the expense of the others: individualism in disregard of the social problem; and the social problem at the expense of freedom and so on. The unity of the person and his world is continually fissured by these heedless sallies in the name of 'knowledge' and great visions of historical moment fall prey to early abuse because they themselves were limited unnecessarily in

focus. This has sometimes been excused in the name of dialectical process and we are lulled into the acceptance of distortions by the convenient notion of their inevitability and we are thus philosophically excused from action.

Great religious thinkers and founders have either abandoned this world altogether in principle, or seen the possibility of its transfiguration and when advocating the latter bring us back to a whole vision of man and his world that directly relates them to the Divine in a miraculous and comprehensive union of infinite potential. The marvel is that the few who have taken such seers seriously should have accomplished so much in face of the timidity of the race.

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